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HISTORY

OF

THE NORTHMEN.

HISTORY

OF

THE NORTHMEN,

OR

DANES AND NORMANS,

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES

TO

THE CONQUEST OF ENGLAND BY WILLIAM OF NORMANDY.

By HENRY WHEATON,

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE SCANDINAVIAN AND ICELANDIC LITERARY SOCIETIES AT COPENHAGEN.

Pour remembrer des ancessors,
Les faits, et les dits, et les mœurs,
Et les félonies des felons,
Et les exploits des Barons.

Le Roman de Rou.

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DENMARK.	NORWAY.	NORMANDY.	ENGLAND.
883. Gorm (the Old). 941.	863. Harald I (Hárfager). 934.	Rollo (first duke) 931.	871. Alfred the Great. 901
941. Harald (Blaatand) Gormsson. 991.	934. Erik I (Blodœxe) son of Harald I.	931. William Longsword, son of Rollo. 942.	901. Edward the Elder, son of Alfred 925.
	940. Hakon I (the Good) son of Harald I. 963.	942. Richard I. son of William Longsword. 996.	925. Athelstane, son of Edward the Elder 941.
	963. Harald II (Graafeld), and his brothers, son of Erik I. 977.		941. Edmund, brother of Athelstane 946.
	977. Hakon Jarl, son of Sigurd. 995.		946. Edred, brother of Edmund 955.
			955. Edwy, nephew of Edred 958.
			958. Edgar, brother of Edwy 975.
			975. Edward (the Martyr) son of Edgar 978.
991. Svend (Tvestkieg) Haraldsson. 1014.	995. Olaf I (Tryggvason). 1000.	996. Richard II, son of Richard I. 1027.	978. Ethelred, brother of Edward 1016.
			1016. Edmund Ironside 1016.
1014. Knutr, or Knud, Svendsson (Canute the Great). 1035.	1015. Olaf II (Saint). 1030. 1028. Canute subdues Norway.	1027. Richard III, son of Richard II. 1029.	1017. Canute the Great 1035.
1035. Harde-Knud, son of Canute. 1044.	Svend, son of Canute, abdicates, 1035.	1029. Robert (le Diable) brother of Richard III. 1035.	1035. Harald (Harefoot) son of Canute 1040.
1044. Magnus (the Good) becomes joint king of Denmark and Norway.	1035. Magnus (the Good) son of Olaf II. 1047.	1035. William the Conqueror, son of Robert 1087.	1040. Harde-Canute, brother of Harald 1042.
1047. Svend (Estrithson), son of Ulfr Jarl and Estritha, a sister of Canute the Great.	Harald Sigurdson (Hárdrade) 1066.		1042. Edward the Confessor 1066.
			1066. Harold, son of Godwin 1066.

PREFACE.

In the following attempt to illustrate the early annals of the North, it has been the writer's aim to seize the principal points in the progress of society and manners in this remote period, which have been either entirely passed over or barely glanced at by the national historians of France and England, but which throw a strong and clear light upon the affairs of Europe during the middle ages, and illustrate the formation of the great monarchies now constituting some of its leading states. For this purpose, resort has, in general, been had to the original sources of information found in the multiplied collections of the learned men and associations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden—to the ancient historical Songs and

Sagas, and especially to the great historical work of Snorre Sturleson, written in the Icelandic or old Scandinavian language, prevailing in the three Northern kingdoms until the formation of the present living tongues of Denmark and Sweden. These sources embrace the most authentic and valuable historical monuments of early transactions possessed by any European nation, which have been illustrated with a diligence and critical skill that may fairly be said to be unrivalled by the antiquarian labours of any other country. In addition to these materials, the author has also made a free and full use of the modern national historians, Schœning, Suhm, and Geijer, — as well as Mr Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons, and M. Depping's valuable work upon the Maritime Expeditions of the Normans. It may be proper to add, that he has incorporated into the present work the substance of two papers in the North-American and Philadelphia Quarterly Reviews, written by himself, the one upon Scandinavian mythology and literature, and the other upon M. Depping's book. He has also

frequently had occasion to quote the first volume of the Ecclesiastical History of Denmark and Norway, by his learned friend, the late Dr Münter, bishop of Zealand; the Sagabibliothek of Professor (now Bishop) P. E. Müller; and the different publications of Professors F. Magnússen, Schlegel, Rafn, and Rask, upon the mythology, language, laws, and literature of the ancient North. He acknowledges, with pride and pleasure, the valuable assistance he has derived from the personal suggestions of these and other literary friends during his residence in this capital—a residence which will ever be associated with some of the most pleasing recollections of his life.

Copenhagen, April 1831.

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HISTORY

OF

THE NORTHMEN.

CHAPTER I.

Knowledge which the Greeks and Romans had of Scandinavia.—Cimbri and Teutones.—Fenni or Skrithfinni.—Migration of the Gothic Tribes.—Vœringjar at Constantinople.—Emigration of the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes to Britain.—Otter and Wulfstan's Periplus of the North Sea and Baltic.

THE fruitful imagination of the ancients attached mysterious ideas to the Northern portion of the earth. This was the region of darkness: but as day sprung from night, so, according to their notions, light and the other beneficent powers and elements of nature were first produced from the North. The Hindús placed in that quarter their fabled mount Meru, where the deities shrouded their divine attributes in darkness and mystery. Latona (the Night) brought forth those two lights of heaven, Apollo and Artemis, in the land of the Hyperboreans, which the Greeks placed in the extreme North. Here was the abode of the Scandinavian gods, from whence they directed their ken over the rest of the world; and when the long nights of winter were illu-

mined with the glorious flashes of the Aurora Borealis streaming above the horizon, the awful forms of the deities, radiant with celestial halos, became distinctly visible to the untutored children of nature, by whom they were devoutly worshipped. Thus, too, the father of history relates how the Hyperboreans—of all the human race the most virtuous and happy, dwell in perpetual peace and delightful companionship with the deities, under cloudless skies, in fields clothed with perpetual verdure, where the fruitful soil yields twice-yearly harvests, its blest inhabitants attain extreme old age, and at last, when satiated with life, joyfully crown their heads with flowers, and plunge headlong from the mountain steeps into the depths of the sea.*

All this is mythic and poetic fiction, whose origin must be sought in the propensity of our restless nature to place the felicity for which it longs, in abodes far removed from the actual scene of our being, and to be attained only on the wings of imagination. What is certain and authentic respecting the knowledge which the classic nations of antiquity had of the Northern peninsula of Europe, may be comprised in a short compass.

The ancient Greeks and Romans considered Scandinavia, Scandia (or Suevia), as an island, or cluster
B. C. 320. of islands, in the northern ocean. Pytheas, a celebrated navigator of Marseilles, who lived a short time before Alexander the Great, had penetrated to these sequestered regions of the globe, and the ancient geographers have left us some notices of his voyage and discoveries. He visited the island of *Albion*, and describes,

* Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder. tom. i. p. 53.

at six days' sail to the north-east from thence, an island or country which he calls Thule, and which some suppose to be a part of the coast of Jutland, which is to this day called Thy or Thy-land, or in the ancient language of the North, Thjóda. Others, with more probability, have traced the name of the ancient Thule in *Tellemark*, a province of South-Norway, from whence Pytheas, or those whose narratives he gathered, may have entered the Sound and the Baltic, where the Phenicians had been before attracted in pursuit of amber. He represents the northern parts of Thule as wild and uncultivated, and peopled by savages who lived by hunting and fishing. The inhabitants of the South were farther advanced in the arts of life: cultivated grain, reared bees, and brewed hydromel, which was their favorite drink. But they were all marked by the same ferocious and warlike character.*

Among the Scandinavian tribes, the ancient geographers and historians enumerated the Sviones, or in the Northern language of the middle ages, the Sviar; the Guttones, Gutæ, or Goths; and the Daukiones, adjacent to the Goths, who are probably the Danes, whose original seat was in Scania, and who are called, in the ancient language of the North, Danir or Danskir.† Pomponius Mela describes a great gulph which makes into the land northwardly from the mouth of the Elbe, which he calls Sinus Codanus, and the great island of

* Ptolem. Geogr. lib. ii. cap. 2. See Murray's Dissertation de Pythea Massiliensi in Nov. Comm. Götting. tom. vi. and Dr Bredsdorff's Dissertation upon the Ancient Geography of the North, in the Transactions of the Skandinavisk Litteraturselskab for 1824, p. 204.

† Tac. Germ. cap. xlv. Plin. lib. iv. cap. 13.

Codononia (probably the peninsula of Jutland), which he says was inhabited by the Teutones.* Pliny the Elder, the first ancient writer who expressly calls this northern region by the name of Scandinavia, also mentions the existence of the Codanian gulf, beyond the Cimbrian promontory, and filled with an archipelago of islands.† Tacitus speaks of the Northern columns of Hercules, referring, doubtless, to the narrow passage of the Sound into the Baltic, so much resembling the Straits of Gibraltar. The fleet of Drusus had failed to pass or even to approach this passage, which was impenetrable to him as it had been to Hercules; and the knowledge which the Romans acquired of the maritime nations on the shores of the Baltic, was obtained by their land journies in search of amber.‡

According to the great Roman historian, the Sviones were a rich and powerful maritime nation. Their monarchs possessed despotic power, such as the traditions of the North attribute to the pontiff-kings, the immediate successors of Odin. Being secured by the sea against sudden invasion, the people were not even trusted with arms for their own defence. They were kept in the custody of the king's slaves. One of the tribes of this nation, the Sitones, were like the rest in all respects, except that they were ruled by a woman: they had not only fallen off in liberty, but (according to Roman ideas) submitted to the last degradation of slavery.‖

* De Situ Orbis. lib. iii. cap. 3.

† Hist. Nat. lib. iv. cap. 27.

‡ Tac. Germ. cap. xxxiv. Græters Suhm. tom. i. p. 358. Gibbon, Decline and Fall, &c. vol. iv. p. 241.

‖ Tac. Germ. cap. xliv.

Several other tribes are also enumerated by Tacitus, who probably were members of the nation, or rather confederation of the Saxons; all of whom worshipped the Scandinavian goddess Hertha, or Mother-Earth, whose statue consecrated in a sacred grove, situated in an island of the sea (probably Zealand) was adored with dark and mysterious rites.* On the western shores of the Baltic, called by him the Suevic sea, the same historian had been told of the Æstyi, whose manners and customs were identical with those of the German Suevi, whose language resembled that of the Britons. This tribe adored the Mother of the Gods, in whose honour they carried the image of a boar, the animal consecrated to the goddess Freya of the Northern mythology. They gathered upon the shores of the sea the yellow amber cast up by its waves, and were astonished at the price paid by the luxury of Rome for this commodity, which to them seemed valueless.†

The Chersonesus Cimbrica, the modern peninsula of Jutland, was the country from which, according to the notions of the Romans, migrated the famous nation of the Cimbri, who invaded Italy with a formidable host about a century before the Christian æra. "Not a small tribe," says Tacitus, "but mighty in fame: the vestiges of their ancient glory still remain in fortifications by the magnitude of which you may measure their former greatness. Our city reckoned six hundred and forty years from its foundation, when the rumour of the Cimbric incursion was first heard, during the consulship of Cecilius Metellus and Papirius Carbo: from which, if we reckon to the late consulship of the emperor

* Tac. Germ. cap. xl.

† Tac. Germ. cap. xlv.

Trajan, two hundred and ten years have elapsed to our own times. What a prodigious length of time has the conquest of Germany required, and in the course of such a protracted war, what a succession of events alternately fortunate and calamitous! No other nation has so often given us cause to dread their arms: not the Samnites, nor Carthagenians, nor Spaniards and Gauls, nor even the Parthians: for the despotic energy of the Arsacidæ is less to be dreaded than the German arm nerved by freedom. After all, if you except the defeat of Crassus, what triumphs can the subject East boast over the eagles of Rome? But the Germans have captured or defeated five armies of the republic, commanded by consular generals, besides the fatal destruction of Varus and his three legions under Augustus Cæsar. Nor were they driven back to their native wilds by the consul Marius from Italy, by the divine Julius from Gaul, and by Drusus, Tiberius, and Germanicus from the banks of the Rhine, without great sacrifices on our part. The immense preparations and boastful threats of Caligula were only the object of their ridicule. After a period of some tranquillity, they have again profited of our internal discords and civil wars to break up the winter quarters of the legions and threaten the Gauls, and though recently repelled, they have been rather triumphed over than conquered."*

Tacitus doubts whether he should consider the Fenni as a Sarmatian or a German tribe. Ptolemy seats them in the south-eastern parts of Lithuania; Tacitus still further north. They were, according to the historian's account, a savage race, living in squalid poverty and

* Tac. Germ. 36.

misery: they had neither arms, nor horses, nor homes: feeding upon the grass of the fields, lying upon the bare ground, clothed with the skins of wild beasts; their sole trust was in their arrows, which for want of iron they pointed with bones. Both men and women hunted together, and shared the produce of the chace. Their infant children had no other shelter from the wild beasts and the elements than the interwoven boughs of the trees; which formed in youth their place of repose, in old age their last asylum. Still they esteemed their lot happier than that of those who, cultivating fields and building habitations, were the alternate slaves of hope and fear.*

Such is a brief summary of the imperfect accounts to be gleaned from the classic writers of Greece and Rome, concerning the ancient North. In the decline of the Roman empire, the history of the wars, by which the kingdom of the Goths was established in Italy and that of the Vandals in Africa, was written by Procopius, the secretary of Belisarius, who speaks of the Goths, Vandals, and Gepidæ as in fact one people, in respect to their origin, language, manners, and institutions. "They are all," says he, "of a fair complexion, have red or yellow hair, and a tall manly stature; are governed by the same laws and customs, were all formerly of the same heathen religion, and are now universally Arian Christians. Their language is that called the Gothic, and they regard themselves as one nation, descended from the same common stock." He also describes the migration and wanderings of the Heruli in the fifth and sixth centuries, from the banks of the Danube to the northern

* Tac. Germ. 46.

ocean, quite to the country of the Danes, whence they crossed the sea and came to the island of Thule, where they resided in the time of Procopius. Thule was a very large island, much larger than Britain, but quite uninhabited in the extreme northern parts. The inhabited part was divided among three nations or tribes, each of which had its king. Among these, he describes the Skrithfinni, (Σκρηθίφινοι) with the same features which Tacitus has ascribed to his Fenni; the Gauten, who were the most numerous; and the Heruli, then recently established in the neighbourhood of the former. All the nations of Thule worshipped numerous gods and demons, who inhabited the earth, air, and waters—both the sea, and the fountains or living streams. To these they offered various kinds of sacrifices, and especially human. Thus they frequently sacrificed their prisoners taken in war to Mars, whom they revered as the most powerful of the gods.*

Cassiodorus, the principal minister at the court of Theodoric, the Gothic King of Italy, gratified the pride of the barbarian conquerors with a history of their nation, compiled from the ancient songs and tales which were preserved among them by tradition. The original of this history is lost, and the abridgment of Jornandes affords but an imperfect idea of its contents. But this latter writer was himself a Goth, and the notices he has given of the migrations and wanderings of that nation harmonize with the ancient traditions of the North as preserved by the native authors. According to Jornandes, the Goths crossed the northern seas from the

* Procopius, de Bello Vandalico. lib. i. cap. 2. De Bello Gothico. lib. ii. cap. 14, 15.

great island of Scandia or Scanzia, under the command of their king *Beric*, and the place where they landed on the southern shore of the Baltic was called Gothiscanzia. They subjugated the Vandals on the sea-coast, and several generations afterwards migrated to Scythia on the borders of the Black Sea, from whence they moved to attack the Roman empire. They were divided into Ostrogoths and Visogoths, East and West Goths,—from their original seats in Scandinavia, a distinction which they always preserved, wherever they transferred their abodes. They traced the genealogies of their hereditary princes up to the gods or demigods, called the *Anses*, and the exploits of these heroes were celebrated in traditionary songs and tales.*

In the history of the Lower or Greek empire, we find other traces of contact between the Scandinavian nations and the southern countries of Europe. The Baltic sea was the earliest scene of their maritime achievements. They were saluted by the native tribes in the gulf of Finnland with the appropriate name of Varængers (Væringjar) or sea-rovers. In the latter part of the ninth century, the chief of one of these bands of adventurers established himself at Austergard, or Novogorod; founded the first dynasty of the Tzars, and mingling the blood of his Norman followers with that of the native Slaves, formed the original germ of the present gigantic nation and empire of Russia. Other adventurers followed in the track of their countrymen. Some passed through Russia (Gardaríki) and sought employment in the service of the Greek emperors at Constantinople. They

* Jornandes, de Rebis Geticis. cap. 3, 4, 13—17. Gibbon, Decline and Fall, &c. vol. i. p. 332.

were retained by these degenerate monarchs as body-guards; their strength was recruited by numerous bands of Icelanders, Norwegians and Danes, who came by the Atlantic and Mediterranean from the 'Island of Thule;' and the brave Væringjar afterwards defended with tried fidelity the tottering throne of the Cæsars.*

In the latter part of the fifth century of the Christian æra, the island of Britain, deserted by its Roman masters, was invaded and subdued by three different tribes of Barbarians who dwelt between the Elbe and the Baltic sea,—the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. The history of the Anglo-Saxon nation, which was formed by the blending of these tribes, is intimately connected with that of the Scandinavians, and it has for us an interest lively and enduring, since from it we trace the origin of the English name and nation. But the race of the Anglo-Saxons belongs to the Teutonic, not the Scandinavian family; and though they participated in the widely diffused worship of Odin, the language spoken by them is perfectly distinct from the ancient Northern, or Icelandic tongue. The Jutes, who came from the northern parts of the Cimbric Chersonesus, were the least numerous of these emigrating tribes. The Angles dwelt in the present duchy of Sleswick,

* Gibbon, Decline and Fall, &c. vol. x. ch. 55. Leveque, Historie de Russie. tom. i. p. 16. Karamsin, Geschichte des Russischen Reiches. tom. i. p. 37, 91. Suhm, Historie af Danmark. tom. ii. p. 91. Note (*a*). Gibbon states, that among these adventurers were Anglo-Saxons, but I am not able to find, from an examination of the authorities he cites, that there is any proof that there were among them any considerable proportion of our Saxon ancestors, unless, indeed, it be after the Norman conquest, though it is very probable there may have been some before.

which they entirely abandoned, leaving the country a perfect desert. The Saxons were of that tribe of the Saxon confederation who inhabited Nordalbingia, or the territory between the Elbe and the Eyder.*

Alfred the Great, King of the West Saxons, was the first sovereign in modern Europe after Charlemagne, who had a proper sense of his public duties, and who aimed to promote the general welfare of society as the object of government, instead of living and reigning merely for his own personal gratification. His talents for the business of war and government were associated with a taste for the useful and elegant arts. His inquisitive mind, insatiable in its thirst for knowledge, was directed with untiring activity towards everything that could contribute to the improvement of society. Among other translations of Latin writers into the Anglo-Saxon tongue, for the instruction of his countrymen, he made a version of the epitome of ancient history of Orosius, to which he added some account of the geography of Europe, derived from the result of his own enquiries. In this work Alfred has inserted the narrative given him by Otter, or Ohter, a Norwegian navigator, of his voyages and discoveries during

* Rask, Angelsaxisk Sproglœre, &c. Professor Rask has quoted from the Saxon Chronicle the following account of the descent of the different portions of the nation from these tribes:—"From the Jutes are descended the men of Kent and of Wight, likewise that tribe of West-Saxons still called Jutland tribe. From the Old-Saxons, the East-Saxons take their origin, as well as the South-Saxons and West-Saxons. From the Angles, whose original country ever after was a desert between the Jutlanders and the Saxons, came the East-Angles, Middle-Angles, Mercians, and all the Northumbrians." *Beda Venerabilis* gives a similar account of the origin of the English in his Hist. Eccl. lib. i. cap. 15.

the reign of Harald Hárfager. In this narrative, Ohter stated to king Alfred that he lived to the north of all the Northmen at Halgoland, opposite to the west sea, and that the land further north was a waste, except in a few places where the *Finnas* dwelt, for hunting in the summer, and in the winter for fishing. He once sailed round the North cape on a voyage of discovery, and proceeded as far as the White Sea, to the east of which he found another tribe, the *Beormas*, who spoke nearly the same language as the Finnas. "Ohter," says the king, "was a very rich man in such goods as are valuable in those countries, and had at the time he visited King Alfred six hundred tame deer, besides six decoy rein deer, which were much valued by the Finnas, because they catch the wild ones with them. Ohter was one of the most considerable men in those parts, yet he had not more than twenty horned cattle, twenty sheep, and twenty swine, and what little he ploughed was with horses. The rents in this country consist chiefly of what is paid by the Finnas, in deer skins, feathers, and whalebone, ship-ropes made of whale hides or those of seals. Every one pays according to his substance; the wealthiest pay the skins of fifteen martins, five rein-deer, one bear-skin, ten bushels of feathers, a cloak of bear's or otter's skin, two ship-ropes, (each sixty-ells long,) one made of whale's, and the other of seal's skin.

"Ohter moreover said, that the country of the Northmen was very long and narrow, and that all the country which is fit either for pasture or ploughing is on the sea-coast, which however in some parts is very rocky; to the eastward are wild mountains parallel to the cultivated land. The Finnas inhabit these mountains, and the

cultivated land is broadest to the eastward, and grows narrow to the northward. To the east it is sixty miles broad, in some places broader; about the middle it is perhaps thirty miles broad, or somewhat more; to the northward, where it is narrowest, it may be only three miles from the sea to the mountains, which are in some parts so wide that a man could scarcely pass over them in a fortnight, and in other parts perhaps in a week. Opposite to this land in the south, is *Sveoland* (Sweden,) on the other side of the mountains and opposite to this land, (Norway) is *Cwenaland.** The *Cwenas* sometimes make incussions against the *Northmen* over these mountains, and sometimes the Northmen on them: there are very large fresh *meres* (lakes) beyond the mountains, and the Cwenas carry their ships over land into the meres, whence they made depredations on the Northmen: their ships are small and very light."

Ohter had also navigated in the Baltic, and he describes a port far to the south of Halgoland, which by his account of it must have been in the present province of Christjanssand, and which is called by him *Sciringesheal.*

" Ohter said also that the Shire which he inhabited is called Halgoland, and he says that no one dwelt to the north of him. From Halgoland is so far a way to the part mentioned in the south of this land called *Sciringesheal* that no one could reach it in a month, if he lay too in the night, and every day had a fair wind. During this voyage he would sail near land; on his starboard would be *Isaland* (Iceland)† and the

* The country between the gulph of Bothnia and mount Sevo.

† This reading has been very properly substituted by Prof. Rask

islands which lie between Isaland and this land, (that is, the Farŏer isles, Shetland, &c.) and finally, this country (Britain) until he arrived at Sciringesheal, and all the way as you proceed you have *Norðvege* (Norway) on the larboard. To the south of Sciringesheal, a great sea makes a vast bay up in the country (Denmark), and is so wide that no one can see across it. *Gotland* (Jutland) is opposite on the other side, and afterwards the *Sillende* (Sleswick). He further says that he sailed in five days from Sciringesheal, to that port which men call *Æt-Hæthum*,* which is between the *Vinedum*, *Seaxum* and *Angle*, and is under the *Dene*. When he sailed to this place from Sciringesheal, *Denamearc* (Halland, and perhaps Zealand) was on his larboard, and on his starboard a wide sea (the Cattegat) for three days; as also two days before he came to Hæthum, Gotland, and Sillende, and many islands, (these lands were inhabited by the *Engle* before they came hither); for two days he had the islands which belong to Denamearc, (Funen, Laland, &c.) on the larboard."

This very curious record also contains the narrative of a voyage made by Vulfstan, a Danish navigator in the southern part of the Baltic, which king Alfred also took down from his own mouth.

"Vulfstan said that he went from Hœthum to Trúso (on the banks of the lake Drausen, in the eastern parts of Prussia) in seven days and nights, the ship being

for *Ireland*, which does not correspond with the other parts of the course described. Iceland was first discovered by the Norwegians in 861, and was, doubtless, well-known to Ohter.

* That is, the city of Sleswick, of which the old Icelandic name was *Heidabœr*.

under sail all the time. *Veonodland* was on his starboard; and on his larboard *Langaland, Lœland, Falster,* and *Sconey* (Scania), which lands all belong to Denemearc. We had also on the larboard, *Burgundaland* (Bornholm), which hath a king of its own. After having left Burgundaland, the countries of Blecingaeg, and Meore, and *Gotland,* were on the larboard; which lands belong to *Sveon* (Sweden), Veonodland (the country of the Vends), was on our starboard all the way to the Viole-mutha, or mouths of the Vistula."

Vulfstan's voyage did not extend beyond the river Illing and the lake, on the banks of which Trúso was situated in *Estland;* but the intercourse, both of commerce and of war, between Scandinavia and the countries on the southern and eastern borders of the Baltic, was incessant and active during the middle ages.*

* Rask, Ottars og Ulfsteens Korte Reideberetninger, &c. in the Transactions of the Skandinaviske Litteraturselskab for 1815.

CHAPTER II.

Discovery of Iceland by the Norwegians.—Physical features of that Island.—Settlement of Iceland by Ingolf.—Discovery of Greenland by Erik the Red.—Discovery of North-America by Leif, the son of Erik the Red.—Vinland explored by Thorvald, brother of Leif.—Thorvald slain by the native Esquimaux.—Settlement of Vinland by Thorfin and his companions.—Ultimate fate of the Norwegian colony in Vinland.—Voyages of the Venetian navigators, the brothers Zeni, in the Northern ocean.

THE restless activity and adventurous spirit of the Scandinavians was not confined to the Baltic sea. They boldly roamed over the great Northern and Western ocean, without chart or compass, in quest of adventures and plunder, or to find out new lands, where they might form establishments more or less permanent. Their navigators discovered the Orcades and the Faröer isles at a very early period; and in 861, Naddod, a Norwegian sea-rover, was driven by a storm from the latter islands towards the northwest, quite to the Arctic circle, until he descried a large country which, from its aspect, he called Snœland, or the land of Snow, but which has been since more appropriately named Iceland. Finding that he could discover no trace of human habitation from the high mountain which he ascended, Naddod returned to Norway with an account of his discovery. It was next visited by Gardar Svarfarson, a native of Sweden, who sailed round it,

and ascertained it to be an island. He spent a winter there, subsisting by fishing, and named it Gardarsholm, or the Island of Gardar.*

In 865, the island was again visited by another Norwegian Vikingr, named Floki *Rafna*,† who, according to the Icelandic traditionary tales, was descended from Goa, the sister of Nor, the fabled founder of the kingdom of Norway. The Landnâmabok and the other Sagas relate, that after taking his departure from the Faröer Isles, and approaching the island he was seeking, he let fly before him three ravens, which he had previously consecrated to the gods, one of which went back to Faröe; the second returned and rested his wearied wing on board the ship; whilst the third directed the navigator towards the land of which he was in search. He named it Island, or Iceland. It presented to his eye the same aspect of dreary desolation which it still exhibits, except that it was covered all over with a thick wood, which has since entirely disappeared. Its rugged mountains rose to the skies, covered with eternal ice and snows. Its subterraneous fires were then kindled, but Mount Hekla had not yet sent forth those eruptions which have since rendered it the rival of Etna and Vesuvius. In other respects the works of nature were the same which still continue to attract the curiosity of the traveller in that land of wonders. Chains of ice-mountains, intersected with deep vallies, bridged over with lava that had flowed centuries ago, and filled with fountains of boiling water shooting up from the subter-

* Schœning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. ii. pp. 101—104. Forster's Geschichte der Entdeckungen und Schiffahrten in Norden, p. 68. Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 189.

† *Rafn* or *Hrafn*, Icl. for *Raven*.

raneous caverns of fire, the earth quaking under his unsteady feet, and yielding in summer no harvest adequate to subsist his flocks and herds during the dreary winter, it is not strange that the disheartened Norwegian returned in the spring to his native land, and abandoned all idea of settling in a country which the gods seemed to have condemned to perpetual convulsions and sterility.*

But the accounts which his companions gave of the newly discovered country were widely different. According to them it was a delightful climate and plentiful soil, and one of them could only impart an adequate idea of its richness and fertility by asserting that "milk dropped from every plant, and butter from every twig." The rumour soon spread over the North of this new and goodly land, where it was said, that the domestic animals could subsist in the open air in the midst of winter, wood was abundant, the waters were plentifully stored with salmon and other fish, and the neighbouring seas abounded with whales and walrusses: "this was the land where man might live free from the tyranny of kings and lords." In short, it seemed to justify the eulogium which the partiality of the natives continues to bestow upon it, that "Iceland is the best land on which the sun shines."†

874. About thirteen years after the discovery of Iceland, Ingolf, the son of a Norwegian Jarl, who had slain his adversary, in one of those deadly feuds so often mentioned in the Northern annals, and was obliged to fly from the revenge of his kindred, who demanded the

* Schœning, tom. ii. p. 106. Henderson's Travels in Iceland, vol. i. p. 308.

† Henderson, vol. i. Introd. p. xv.

price of blood, and his brother-in-law, Hjörleif, found a refuge in this sequestered island, beyond the reach of Harald Hárfager, who had subdued all the petty kings of Norway, and reduced the whole country under his feudal dominion. It is recorded of Hjörleif, that he never offered sacrifice to the deities: but Ingolf was deeply impressed with the superstition of his age and country. He not only consulted an oracle before he set sail for Iceland, but took with him the consecrated door-posts of his Norwegian house, and as he approached the coast of Iceland, threw them into the sea, vowing that he would land and establish his dwelling wherever the winds and waves should cast them on the shore. But they were drifted out of sight, and he was carried away in a different direction. He landed at a promontory on the south-east coast of the island, called to this day Ingolfshödi. Three years afterwards, his slaves, who had been in pursuit of the sacred door-posts, found them driven on shore at a bay on the south-western coast. Ingolf, true to his vow, fixed his abode in the frith, now called Faxe-Fiord, at the place which is the present capital of the island, Reykiavik, though reproached by his own slaves, for preferring a spot so unpromising to the fine districts they had passed on their way from the east. His friend and companion Hjörleif landed and settled himself at a place on the south coast, which is to this day called Hjörleifshöfdi. Being decoyed into a wood by his Irish slaves in the following spring, in search of a bear, he was treacherously murdered by them, together with the rest of his company. The slaves fled with his goods to the Westmanna isles, but were afterwards pursued and killed by Ingolf. In his lament over the dead body of his friend, as it is

recorded in the Sagas, he is made to say: "What an ignoble thing for so excellent a man to fall by the hand of vile slaves.! But such must ever be the fate of those who will not sacrifice to the Gods."*

982. About a century after the first discovery and settlement of Iceland, Torwald, a Jarl of Norway, who had been exiled from his native country for having slain his enemy, retired to that island with his son Erik, surnamed Raudi, or the Red. After the death of his father, Erik Raudi was compelled to leave Iceland for the same reason which had banished Torwald from Norway. Seeking a new asylum, he took ship, and directed his course towards the south-west, in which direction some adventurers had before discovered a new land. He found a small island in a strait which he named Eriks-Sund, and passed the winter there. In the spring he explored the main-land, and, finding it covered with a delightful verdure, he called it Grön-land. He subsequently returned to Iceland, and led a small colony to this newly discovered country. Some years after-

999. wards, Leif, the son of Erik the Red, went to Norway, where he was favorably received by the reigning king, Olaf Trayggvason, to whom he described the country in such favorable terms, that Olaf determined to sustain the new colony. Having been himself recently converted to Christianity, the king was filled with zeal for the propagation of the faith. He persuaded Leif to be baptised; and sent him back to Greenland, accompanied with a missionary, by whose efforts his father Erik and

* Landnâmabok, part i. cap. 6, 7, 8; part iv. cap. 12. Henderson, vol. i. pp. 12, 309. Schœning, tom. i, pp. 107—113. Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 189—192.

the other colonists were converted. The church and colony of Greenland continued to flourish, until a re- 1348.
markable disease, called the *Black Plague*, which spread all over the countries of the North, ravaged the settlements, and their ruin was finally consummated by a feud 1418.
with the wild natives. It is a matter of doubt whether the Norwegian colonies were situate on the east coast of Greenland, as well as to the westward of cape Farewell. The present Danish establishments on the west coast are of more modern origin.* The bleak and barren shores of this inhospitable region have been, in more modern times, the scene of the labours and sufferings of the Danish missionaries, to whom we are also indebted for our knowledge of the singularly fantastic structure of the dialect spoken by the native Esquimaux. Among these, the most distinguished for his self-devotion and enlightened zeal, was Hans Egede, the first protestant Christian missionary to Greenland. The almost incredible hardships and privations he endured in his voyage and long exile in this dreary country, were participated by his faithful wife Gertrude. Their names are jointly inscribed on an humble pillar of Norwegian marble, in the princely gardens of Jœgerspriis, amidst the monuments of other benefactors of their country, with the map of the region which was the scene of their truly glorious exploits, traced upon the same stone.†

But to return to the ancient maritime discoveries of

* Torfœi Groenlandia antiqua (Hafn. 1706), p. 14. Schœning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. iii. p. 410. Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap. xciii. civ.

† Another very distinguished missionary in Greenland, was the late bishop Fabricius, who published a grammar and dictionary of the language.

the Northmen:—There was formerly, say the ancient Sagas, a man named Herjolf, who was descended from Ingolf, the first settler of Iceland. This man navigated from one country to another with his son Bjarne, and generally spent the winters in Norway. It happened once on a time that they were separated from each other, and Bjarne sought his father in Norway, but not finding him there, he learnt that he was gone to the newly discovered country of Greenland. Bjarne resolved to seek and find out his father, wherever he
1001. might be, and for this purpose set sail for Greenland, directing himself by the observation of the stars, and by what others had told him of the situation of the land. The three first days he was carried to the west, but afterwards, the wind changing, blew with violence from the north, and drove him southwardly for several days. He at last descried a flat country, covered with wood, the appearance of which was so different from that of Greenland, as it had been described to him, that he would not go on shore, but made sail to the north-west. In this course, he saw an island at a distance, but continued his voyage, and arrived safely in Greenland, where he found his father established at the promontory, afterwards called Herjolfs-nœs, directly opposite to the south-west point of Iceland.

1002. In the following summer, Bjarne made another voyage to Norway, where he was hospitably received by Erik, a distinguished Jarl of that country. The Jarl, to whom he related his adventures, reproached him for not having explored the new land towards which he had been accidentally driven. Bjarne having returned to his father in Greenland, there was much talk among the settlers of pursuing his discovery. The restless, adventurous spirit

of Leif, son of Erik the Red, was excited to emulate the fame his father had acquired by the discovery of Greenland. He purchased Bjarne's ship, and manned it with thirty-five men. Leif then requested his father to become the commander of the enterprize. Erik at first declined, on account of the increasing infirmities of his old age, which rendered him less able to bear the fatigues of a sea-faring life. He was at last persuaded by his son to embark, but as he was going down to the vessel on horseback, his horse stumbled, which Erik received as an evil omen for his undertaking:—"I do not believe," said he, "that it is given to me to discover any more lands, and here will I abide." Erik returned back to his house, and Leif set sail with his thirty-five companions, among whom was one of his father's servants, a native of the South-countries, named Tyrker (Dieterich-Dirk), probably a German.

They first discovered what they supposed to be one of the countries seen by Bjarne, the coast of which was a flat, stony land, and the back ground crowned with lofty mountains, covered with ice and snow. This they named Helluland, or the flat country. Pursuing their voyage farther south, they soon came to another coast, also flat, covered with thick wood, and the shores of white sand, gradually sloping towards the sea. Here they cast anchor and went on shore. They named the country Mark-land, or the country of the wood, and pursued their voyage with a north-east wind for two days and nights, when they discovered a third land, the northern coast of which was sheltered by an island. Here they again landed, and found a country, not mountainous, but undulating and woody, and abounding with fruits and berries, delicious to the taste. From thence they

re-embarked, and made sail to the west to seek a harbour, which they at last found at the mouth of a river, where they were swept by the tide into the lake from which the river issued. They cast anchor, and pitched their tents at this spot, and found the river and lake full of the largest salmon they had ever seen. Finding the climate very temperate, and the soil fruitful in pasturage, they determined to build huts and pass the winter here. The days were nearer of an equal length than in Greenland or Iceland, and when they were at the shortest, the sun rose at half-past seven, and set at half-past four o'clock.*

It happened one day soon after their arrival, that Tyrker, the German, was missing, and as Leif set a great value upon the youth, on account of his skill in various arts, he sent his followers in search of him in every direction. When they at last found him, he began to speak to them in the Teutonic language, with many extravagant signs of joy. They at last made out to understand from him in the North tongue, that he had found in the vicinity vines bearing wild grapes. He led them to the spot, and they brought to their chief a quantity of the grapes which they had gathered. At first, Leif doubted whether they were really that fruit, but the German assured him he was well acquainted with it, being a native of the southern wine countries. Leif, thereupon, named the country Vinland.

In the spring following, Leif returned to Greenland. In the winter died his father, Erik the Red, and his brother Thorwald, not being satisfied with the discoveries

* Supposing this computation to be correct, it must have been in the latitude of Boston, the present capital of New England.

made by Leif, obtained from him his ship, and engaged thirty companions to embark with him on a new voyage of discovery. On his arrival in Vinland, he passed the winter in the huts constructed by Leif, and subsisted by fishing. In the spring, he took with him a part of his ship's company in a large boat, and explored the coast to the westward, which he found a pleasant country, well wooded, the shores consisting of banks of white sand, and a chain of islands running along the coast, separated from each other by shallow inlets, but no trace of wild beasts or of human inhabitants, except a corn-shed of wood. After spending the summer in this excursion, they returned to their winter quarters. In the following summer, Torwald sailed in his ship to examine the east and north, but was cast on shore by a storm, and the whole season was lost in repairing the vessel. Here he erected the keel of his ship, which was no longer fit for service, on a head-land, which he called, from that circumstance, Kijalar-nes. He then pursued his voyage to the eastward, giving names to the various capes and bays which he discovered, until he came to a large inlet, where he cast anchor, attracted by the promising appearance of the country, which rose in high lands covered with thick wood. Here the adventurers disembarked, and Thorwald declared "this is a goodly place: here will I take up my abode." Shortly afterward, the adventurers descried on the shore three small batteaux made of hides, under each of which was a band of three natives. These they took prisoners, except one, who made his escape to the mountains, and inhumanly put them to death the same day. A little while after, their wanton cruelty was avenged by the natives, who approached in a multitude of batteaux, and took the

companions of Thorwald by surprise, as they were imprudently sleeping, contrary to his admonitions. Thorwald gave them the alarm, and ordered them to shield themselves against the arrows of the natives by wooden balks set up against the sides of the vessel. Not one of his companions was wounded, and the natives took to flight after discharging a shower of arrows at the Northmen. But Thorwald himself received a mortal wound, and at his own request was buried at the point of the promontory, where he meant to have settled, and a cross erected at his head and another at his feet. The cape was named, from this circumstance, Krossa-nes. The colony of Greenland had been before this time converted to Christianity, but Erik the Red, Thorwald's father, died a heathen. The survivors of Thorwald passed the winter in Vinland, and in the spring returned to Greenland with the news of their discoveries, and of the melancholy fate of Thorwald.

The native inhabitants found by the Northmen in Vinland, resembled those on the western coast of Greenland. These Esquimaux were called by them Skrœlingar, or dwarfs, from their diminutive and squalid appearance, in the same manner as their Gothic ancestors had given a similar appellation to the Finns and Laplanders. They found these aborigines deficient in manly courage and bodily strength.

Erik left another son named Thorstein, who having learnt the death of his brother Thorwald, embarked for Vinland with twenty-five companions and his wife Gudrida, principally for the purpose of bringing home the body of his deceased brother. He encountered on his passage contrary winds, and after beating about for some time, was at last driven back to a part of the coast

of Greenland far remote from that where the Northmen colony was established. Here he was compelled to pass the winter, enduring all the hardships of that rigorous season in a high northern latitude, to which was added the misfortune of a contagious disease which broke out amongst the adventurers. Thorstein and the greater part of his companions perished, and Gudrida returned home with his body.

In the following summer, there came to Greenland from Norway a man of illustrious birth and great wealth, named Thorfin, who became enamoured of Thorstein's widow Gudrida, and demanded her in marriage of Leif, who had succeeded to the patriarchal authority of his father, Erik the Red. The chieftain determined to effect a settlement in Vinland, and for that purpose formed an association of sixty followers, with whom he agreed to share equally the profits of the enterprise. He took with him all kinds of domestic animals, tools, and provisions to form a permanent colony, and was accompanied by his wife Gudrida, and five other women. He reached the same point of the coast, formerly occupied by Leif, where he passed the winter. In the following spring, the Skrœlingar came in great multitudes to trade with the Northmen in peltries and other productions. Thorfin forbade his companions from selling them arms, which were the objects they most passionately desired; and to secure himself against a surprise, he surrounded his huts with a high pallisade. One of the natives seized an axe, and ran off with his prize to his companions. He made the first experiment of his skill in using it by striking one of his companions, who fell dead on the spot. The natives were seized with terror and astonishment at this result, and one of them, who, by his commanding air and manner seemed

to be a chief, took the axe, and after examining it for some time with great attention, threw it indignantly into the sea.

After a residence of three years in Vinland, Thorfin returned to his native country with specimens of the fruits and peltries which he had collected. After making several voyages, he finished his days in Iceland, where he built a large mansion, and lived in a style of patriarchal hospitality, rivalling the principal chieftains of the country. He had a son named Snorre, who was born in Vinland; and Gudrida, his widow, afterwards made a pilgrimage to Rome, and on her return to Iceland, retired to a convent, situated near a church which had been erected by Thorfin.

We dwell upon these collateral circumstances, because they serve to confirm the authenticity of the main narratives, by reference to facts and incidents notorious to all the people of Iceland. A part of Thorfin's company still remained in Vinland, and they were afterwards joined by two Icelandic chieftains, named Helgi and Fiombogi, who were brothers, and fitted out an expedition from the Greenland colony. They were persuaded by Freydisa, daughter of Erik the Red, an intriguing and deceitful woman, to permit her to accompany them, and to share in the advantages of the voyage. During her residence in the infant colony, this female fury excited violent dissentions among the settlers, which terminated in the massacre of thirty persons. After this tragic catastrophe, Freydisa returned to her paternal home in Greenland, where she lived and died the object of universal contempt and hatred.*

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap. cv—cxii. Torfæi, Hist. Vinlandiæ antiquæ, cap. i.—iii.

The Eyrbyggja-Saga relates that towards the close of the reign of king Olaf the Saint,* Gudleif, the son of Gudlaug, made a trading voyage from Iceland to Dublin, and as he was returning along the western coast of Ireland, met with heavy gales from the east and north, which drove him far into the ocean towards the south-west. After many days, Gudleif and his companions saw land in that direction, and approaching the shore, cast anchor in a convenient harbour. Here the natives, who were dark coloured, approached them. The Icelanders did not comprehend the language, though it seemed to them not unlike the Irish tongue. In a short time, a great body of the natives assembled, made the strangers prisoners, and carried them bound into the country. Here they were met by a venerable chieftain, of a noble and commanding aspect and fair complexion, who spoke Icelandic, and enquired after Snorre Gode and other individuals then living in the island. The natives were divided in opinion, whether to put the strangers to death, or to make them slaves and divide them among the inhabitants. But after some consultation, the white chieftain informed them that they were at liberty to depart, adding his counsel that they should make no delay, as the natives were cruel to strangers. He refused to tell his name, but gave to Gudleif presents, of a gold ring for Snorre's sister Thurida, and a sword for her son. Gudleif returned to Iceland with these gifts, where it was concluded that this person was Björn, a famous Skald, who had been a lover of Thurida, and who left Iceland in the year 998.†

* St Olaf died in 1030.

† Müller, Sagabibliothek, tom. i. p. 193.

No subsequent traces of the Norman colony in America are to be found until the year 1059, when it is said that an Irish or Saxon priest, named Jon or John, who had preached for some time as a missionary in Iceland, went to Vinland, for the purpose of converting the colonists to Christianity, where he was murdered by the
1121. heathens. A bishop of Greenland, named Erik, afterwards undertook the same voyage, for the same purpose, but with what success is uncertain.* The authenticity of the Icelandic accounts of the discovery and settlement of Vinland were recognized in Denmark shortly after this period by king Svend Estrithson, or Sweno II, in a conversation which Adam of Bremen had with this monarch.† But no further mention is made of them in the national annals, and it may appear doubtful what degree of credit is due to the relations of the Venetian navigators, the two brothers Zeni, who are said to have sailed in the latter part of the fourteenth century, in the service of a Norman prince of the Orcades to the coasts of New England, Carolina, and even Mexico, or at least to have collected authentic accounts of voyages as far west and south as these countries. The land discovered and peopled by the Norwegians is called by Antonio Zeni, Estotoland, and he states, among other particulars, that the princes of the country still had in their possession Latin books, which they did not understand, and which were probably those left by the bishop Erik during his mission.‡

* Munter, Kirchengeshichte von Dænemark und Norwegen, tom. i. p. 562.

† Adam. Brem. de Situ Dan. cap. 246.

‡ Forster, Entdeckungen in Norden, pp. 217—250. Daru, Histoire de Venise, tom. vi. liv. 40, p. 285.

Supposing these latter discoveries to be authentic, they could hardly have escaped the attention of Columbus, who had himself navigated in the Arctic seas, but whose mind dwelt with such intense fondness upon his favorite idea of finding a passage to the East Indies, across the western ocean, that he might have neglected these indications of the existence of another continent in the direction pursued by the Venetian adventurers. At all events, there is not the slightest reason to believe that the illustrious Genoese was acquainted with the discovery of North America by the Normans five centuries before his time, however well authenticated that fact now appears to be by the Icelandic records, to which we have referred. The colony established by them probably perished in the same manner with the ancient establishments in Greenland. Some faint traces of its existence may, perhaps, be found in the relations of the Jesuit missionaries respecting a native tribe in the district of Gaspé, at the mouth of the St Lawrence, who are said to have attained a certain degree of civilization, to have worshipped the sun, and observed the position of the stars. Others revered the symbol of the cross before the arrival of the French missionaries, which, according to their tradition, had been taught them by a venerable person, who cured, by this means, a terrible epidemic which raged among them.*

* Malté-Brun, Geography, Engl. Ed. vol. v. p. 135. See an interesting Dissertation upon the Discovery of America by the Scandinavians, by J. H. Schröder, in a periodical published at Upsala, called Svea, an. 1818, tom. i. p. 197.

CHAPTER III.

Permanent settlement of Iceland by the Norwegians.—Saga of Thorolf.—Religion of the first settlers.—Temples, sacrifices, and worship.—Authority of the pontiff-chieftains.—Local and general popular assemblies.—Legislation.—Laws of Ulfljot.—Laws preserved by local tradition.—Spirit of Freedom.—Various religious sects among the heathen Icelanders.—First Christian missionaries to Iceland.—Final establishment of Christianity.—Abolition of the *Holmgánga*, or trial by battle.—Egill's Saga.—Forms of civil procedure.

Ingolf, the first settler of Iceland, was followed by other illustrious exiles from Norway, who found in the enjoyment of liberty and independence a full compensation for the toils and hardships they were compelled to endure. The habitable parts of the island thus became in a few years entirely peopled by a Norwegian colony, among whom were several of the descendants of the Ynlings or ancient kings of Norway and Sweden, supposed to be the posterity of Odin. The manner in which this new society was formed and organized, may be best illustrated by the story of a single individual.

We have selected for this purpose that of Rolf, or Thorolf, as it is told in the Eyrbyggja and other sagas. This chieftain resided in the northern parts of Norway. and, like all the other petty kings and chiefs of the country, was the pontiff of religion as well as the

patriarchal head of his clan. Rolf presided in the great temple of Thor, the peculiar national deity of Norway, in the island of Mostur, and wore a long beard, from which he was called Thorolf-Mostrar-skegg. Thorolf had incurred the resentment of king Harald Hárfager, by giving an asylum to Björn, one of Thorolf's relations, who was persecuted by that monarch. Harald held an assize or *Thing*, and proclaimed Thorolf an outlaw, unless he surrendered himself with Björn into the king's hands, within a limited period. Thorolf offered a great sacrifice to his tutelary deity, and consulted the oracle of Thor, whether he should surrender himself to the king, or migrate to Iceland, which had been settled by Ingolf ten years before. The response of the oracle determined him to seek an asylum in this remote and sequestered island. He set sail, carrying with him the earth upon which the throne of Thor had been placed, the image of the god, and the greater part of the wooden work of his temple. He took also his goods, his slaves, and his family. Many friends followed him. When the vessel approached the south-western coast of Iceland, and entered the Maxe-Fiord, the adventurer cast into the sea the columns of the sanctuary, on which the image of the god was carved, intending to land wherever they should be carried by the winds and waves. He followed them to the northward round the promontory of Snæfellsness, and entered the bay on the other side, to which, from its extreme breadth, he gave the name of Breida-Fjord. Here Thorolf landed, and took formal possession of that part of the coast in the ancient accustomed manner, by walking with a burning fire-brand in his hand round the lands he intended to occupy, and marking the boundaries by setting fire to

the grass. He then built a large dwelling-house on the shores of what was afterwards called the Hofs-vog, or Temple-Bay, and erected a spacious temple to Thor, having an entrance door on each side, and towards the inner end were erected the sacred columns of the former temple, in which the *regin-naglar*, or nails of the divinity, were fastened. Within these columns was a sanctuary, on which was placed a silver ring, two ounces in weight, which was used in the ministration of every solemn oath, and adorned the person of the pontiff-chieftain in every public assembly of the people. The basin for receiving the blood of the sacrifices was placed by the side of the altar, with the instrument of sprinkling, and around it stood, in separate niches, the images of the other deities worshipped by the people of the North. The assize, or *Herjar-thing*,* of the infant community, was held in the open air near this temple, and the oaths of the jurors and witnesses were sanctioned amidst the blood of sacrifice, by a solemn appeal to the national deities: "So help me Freyr, Njord, and the all-mighty As (that is, Odin)!"† The scite of the temple, and the place of popular assembly, were both considered as consecrated ground, not to be defiled with blood, nor polluted with any of the baser necessities of nature. A tribute was

* *Thing* signifies in the ancient language of the North a popular assembly, court of justice, or assize: *Al-thing*, a general meeting of that kind, and *Alls-herjar-thing*, the general convention of chiefs, nobles, or lords. The diet of Norway is called to this day the *Stor-thing*, a great assembly.

† *As*, God; Plural, *Æsir*, the Gods; here limited to the chief-deity by the epithet *almighty*. So the deities were called in the ancient language of Etruria, *Æsi—Æsir*; Suetonius in Octav. cap. 97. The formula of this oath is given both in the Eyrbyggja Saga, cap. iv., and the Landnáma-bók, p. 300.

established and collected by Thorolf from all the members of his little community, to defray the expenses of the temple and the worship there maintained.

The infant settlement thus commenced, was soon strengthened by the arrival of Björn the fugitive outlaw, on whose account Thorolf was compelled to leave his native country. Each freely chose his several habitation according to his own pleasure, and the new colony soon became divided into three separate districts, each of which at first acknowledged the authority of Thorolf as supreme pontiff. At last dissentions broke out among the inhabitants, and the sacred spot was polluted with blood shed in their feuds, which were prosecuted with deadly fury. But it is unnecessary to pursue the narrative any further, as sufficient has been stated to enable the reader to form a general notion how these little communities were founded, with their public institutions partaking at once of a patriarchal, pontifical, and popular form of government, but not extending beyond the limits of the narrow valley in which they were established, and but imperfectly adapted to secure the blessings of public order.*

In the space of about sixty years the habitable parts of this great island were occupied by settlers from Norway, notwithstanding king Harald had endeavoured to discourage the spirit of emigration, by imposing a severe penalty upon those who left his dominions for this purpose. They brought with them both the religious and

874 to 930.

* Müller, Saga-bibliothek, tom. i. pp. 189—198. Henderson's Ireland, vol. i. pp. 64—68. Those who have the curiosity to pursue the story, will find an elegant abstract of the Eyrbyggjasaga by Sir Walter Scott, in Jamieson and Weber's Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, p. 447.

civil institutions of their native land. The chieftains, who led each successive company, were, like Thorolf, the patriarchal rulers, and the religious pontiffs of their tribe. They brought with them, not only their families and domestic slaves, but a numerous retinue of dependents. These may more properly be called clients than vassals, since their relation to their chieftains was more like that of the Roman plebeian to his patron than of the feudal vassal to his lord. The followers were elevated far above the class of slaves by the possession of personal freedom and property, but they resorted to the protection of the aristocracy, as the natural judges of their controversies in peace and their leaders in war. The chieftains who bore the principal part of the expense of these expeditions, naturally appropriated to themselves the lands which they afterwards granted out to the poorer colonists, upon the payment of a perpetual rent, and a sort of tythes for the maintainance of religious rites. To this was sometimes superadded an hereditary personal jurisdiction over the client, and his posterity, which partook somewhat more of the feudal relation. The chieftains who thus formed this patriarchal aristocracy were called *Godar* or *Hof-godar*, because they performed the public offices of religion, as well as the functions of civil magistracy. And it is very remarkable, that even after the introduction of Christianity into the island, the bishops continued for some time to exercise civil jurisdiction under the sacred name of Godar, such is the force of habit over the minds of a rude people in the union of secular and ecclesiastical authority.*

* J. F. G. Schlegel, Comment. de Codice Grágás, &c. § 1.

The pontiff-chieftains of the various little communities, among which the island was divided, had at first no common umpire, and the evils growing out of their dissentions, and the animosities engendered between so many rival tribes or clans, rendered it at last imperiously necessary to combine these separate societies together by some kind of fundamental law. On this occasion the Icelanders, like the people of the ancient Greek republics, resorted to the wisdom of a single legislator, and confided to him the task of providing a remedy for the disorders of their infant state. Ulfljot, who was the object of their choice, undertook a voyage 925.
to Norway, in his sixtieth year, to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the legal customs and institutions of the parent country. Here he sat for three years at the feet of Thorleif the Wise, famous for his skill in the laws, and on his return to his native island, with the assistance of another chieftain of great influence and sagacity, Grim Geitskor, framed a code which was accepted by the people in a general national as- 928.
sembly.*

The Icelandic legislators, following the indications pointed out by nature, divided the whole island into four great quarters, or Viertel, called, in the Icelandic tongue, *Fjerdingar*. In each of these they established a chief magistrate, who was chosen by the free voice of the people, and whose office very much resembled that of the *Godi* before-mentioned. These quarters were again divided into smaller districts, in which all the freemen, possessed of landed property, had a voice in the public assembly. The great national assembly, or

* J. F. G. Schlegel, Comment. de Cod. Grágás, § 2.

assize of the island, at which all the freeholders had a right to participate, by themselves or their delegates, was held annually, and was called the *Al-thing*. It bore a strong family likeness to the national assemblies of the parent country, and of the other Scandinavian nations, and some similitude to the Vitena-gemót of the Anglo-Saxons, and the Fields of March and May of the primitive Franks. The place of meeting was situated on a level plain on the shores of the lake of Thing-valle, and was called Lög-bergit, or the Law-Mount. It is at this day a wild and dreary scene, the surrounding country having been convulsed and torn to pieces by volcanic eruptions; but it must always have presented a striking picture, suited to the solemnity of the occasion which brought together the assembled people of Iceland.* The national assembly continued to be held at this place for eight centuries, until it was removed, a few years since, to a more convenient spot, but one less hallowed in popular opinion by its venerable antiquity and historical associations. The president of this assembly was chosen for life, and was called Lögsögomadr, or Promulgator of the Law.† His functions were both legislative and judicial, and in the latter respect, were similar to those of the Lagmann of the Gothic institutions. Indeed, he afterwards received the same name. After the introduction of book-writing, the book of the law was deposited in his hands, and he naturally became its most authoritative expounder. For nearly two centuries after its enactment, the laws of Ulfljot were preserved by

* Mackenzie's Travels in Iceland, p. 318.

† That is, the living law!

tradition only, being for that purpose recited annually by the Lögsögomadr in the national assembly; from which we may readily infer how extremely simple they must have been in their details, and how great the latitude of interpretation indulged by this magistrate. Like all other systems of unwritten law, and this was *literally* such, it attributed great weight to the authority of precedents, which also were preserved in the same manner with the original laws themselves—by oral tradition. The forms of action and of pleading, which were very exactly observed by the Normans, even of this early age, were also expounded by the Promulgator of the Law in the public assembly, so that they might be known to the people, and invariably observed in the assises of the local districts. When the laws came afterwards to be reduced to a written text, those precedents, which had acquired the force of law, were incorporated into the code.*

Ulfljot was the first citizen raised to that high office by his grateful countrymen. It was afterwards filled by the celebrated Snorre Sturleson, and the degree of importance attached to it is strikingly illustrated by the circumstance, that Time was computed by the Icelanders from the periods during which this magistracy was occupied by different individuals, the anniversary of their election serving to mark a distinct chronological epoch in the national annals.

As the laws of Ulfljot nowhere exist at the present day in a perfect form, it is impossible to form anything

* J. F. G. Schlegel, Comment. de Cod. Grágás, § 2, 3, p. 60, Note.

like an adequate notion of the precise nature of these institutions. In general, we may conclude that they were framed after the model of the customary law of the parent country, with an adaption to the special circumstances and local condition of Iceland. Indeed, a system of original legislation, departing entirely from historical antecedents, and unaccommodated to the prejudices and usages of the people, would have been unhesitatingly rejected by them. Thorleif the Wise, who was consulted by Ulfljot in the compilation of his laws, was afterwards employed by king Hakon the Good in the formation of the Norwegian law, called the Gule-thing law. But as this latter code no longer exists in its original form, and as we have only scattered fragments of the laws of Ulfljot, the two systems of jurisprudence cannot be compared together. Doubtless both of them were collections of the immemorial usages and customs, already sanctioned by popular acceptances, rather than systematic codes of civil and criminal jurisprudence. The political part of Ulfljot's institutions formed the basis of the government of Iceland during the three centuries of the republic. If they secured the blessings of social order in an imperfect degree only, the same may be said of the constitutional code of every other country in Europe during the middle ages. The Icelandic commonwealth was torn with civil dissentions of the most implacable character, and resembling at once the factions of the Italian republics and the anarchy of the feudal law. But the great body of the people was never reduced to the condition of feudal serfs. They nourished a proud spirit of personal independence, which, if partaking of the barbarous character of the

age, became the parent of adventurous enterprise, at first in brilliant feats of arms, and afterwards in those arts which adorn and embellish human life.

The introduction of Christianity into Iceland, is the most remarkable epoch in its subsequent history. Some of its inhabitants had always refused to worship the new gods originally introduced into the parent country from the East. Others refused to sacrifice to the peculiar national deities. Every family had its private faith and worship. Thorkill, the grandson of the first settler Ingolf, as he felt the near approach of death, requested to be carried out into the open air, where he might see the cheering light of the sun, and commend his parting spirit to the God who had created both sun and stars. Many of the Icelanders, in their voyages to Denmark and England, and in their military service with the Væringjar at Constantinople, had received the initiating rites of Christianity, as then administered in those countries, but on their return to Iceland, did not scruple to sacrifice to Thor as the local tutelary deity of the island. The first Christian missionary was brought to Iceland by Thorwald, son of Kodran, a sea-rover, who, having been baptized on the banks of the Elbe, by a German priest named Frederick, persuaded his instructor to accompany him to his native country, one hundred years after the first settlement, and during the chief magistracy of the Lagmann, Thorkel Mani.* His exertions were not wholly fruitless, and were afterwards seconded, by other missionaries sent by Olaf Trayggvason, king of Norway, who, having established the new religion in that country, was anxious to propagate the

981.

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte von Dænemark und Norwegen, tom. i. pp. 523—527.

faith among the various Norwegian colonies in the western seas. Among these missionaries were Gizur the White, and Hjalti, both Icelandic converts, who had been banished by the heathen party on account of their zeal for Christianity. The latter had composed a satirical song in disparagement of the insular deities, one strophe of which ran as follows:—

'I will not serve an idol log
For one, I care not which;
But, either Odin is a dog,
Or Freya is a bitch.*'

1000. On the arrival of these exiles in the island, they found the national assembly of the Al-thing in session at Thing-valle, and immediately proceeded thither for the purpose of rallying the Christian party. Being joined by their friends, they boldly marched to the Lög-berg, or Mount of the Law, in solemn procession, carrying crosses in their hands. Whilst the whole assembly were awed with this extraordinary scene, Hjalti offered incense, and Gissur expounded to the multitude the truths of Christianity with such fervid eloquence, that a large portion of his audience broke off from the assembly, and avowed their determination to embrace the new religion. Whilst they were engaged in this discussion, news arrived that an eruption of lava had broken out with great fury in a neighbouring mountain. "It is the effect of the wrath of our offended deities," exclaimed the worshippers of Thor and Odin. "And what excited their wrath," answered Snorre Gode, a distinguished

* Sir W. Scott, Eyrbyggja-Saga, Jamieson's Northern Antiquities, p. 501, Note.

pontiff-chieftain, "what excited their wrath when these rocks of lava, which we ourselves tread, were themselves a glowing torrent?" This answer effectually silenced the advocates of the ancient religion, at least for the time; for these lava rocks were universally known to have been there before the country was inhabited. But the genius of heathenism was still stubbornly bent on resistance to this innovation. The heathen party determined to offer two human beings from each quarter of the island as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of the gods, and stay the further progress of what they deemed this moral pestilence. On which, the Christian missionaries, determined not to be outstripped in zeal, convened a meeting of their friends, and proposed that an equal number of the Christian party should seal with their blood the truth of the religion for which they so strenuously contended.*

The next day, Thorgeir, who was the Lagmann of the time, convened the assembly, with the avowed determination to put an end to the controversy which thus threatened to kindle a civil war, and to deluge the island with blood. With this view, he addressed them as follows: "Hear me, ye wise men, and listen to my words, ye people! The ruin of that state is at hand, when all the citizens do not obey the same law, and follow the same customs. Division and hate prevail among us; these must soon give rise to civil war, which will destroy our resources, lay waste our isle, and reduce it to a barren wilderness. As union and concord strengthen the weak, so disunion and discord weaken the strong. Let us then strive with all our might, least our internal peace

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. pp. 534, 540.

be destroyed by a divided rule. Reflect then upon what ye well know, without having need to be reminded of the fact, how the kings of Denmark and Norway have become enfeebled by the destructive wars waged on the dispute of religion, until at last their subjects and counsellors have been reduced to the necessity of making peace without their consent. These monarchs have thus come to feel the healing virtue of peace and friendship, and laying aside their bitter hate, have become, to the great joy of their subjects, the best friends. And though we, magistrates and chieftains of this island, cannot pretend to compare ourselves with these kings in power, or with their counsellors in wisdom, still we may laudably imitate whatever is praiseworthy in their public conduct. We should then endeavour to pursue a course by which all may be reconciled, and adopt the same laws and customs, otherwise, nothing is more certain than that our peace is gone for ever."

This speech was received with approbation by the assembly, who referred to the decision of the Lagmann, who promulgated a decree, purporting, that all the inhabitants of the island should be baptised, the idols and temples destroyed, no man to worship the ancient deities publicly upon the penalty of banishment; but private worship, the exposition of infants, the eating of horse-flesh, and other practices *not inconsistent with the precepts of Christianity*, to be still tolerated. This law was ratified by the assembly, all the heathens suffered themselves to be signed with the cross, and some were baptised in the hot water baths of Langerdal and Reikdal. The apprehensions of famine, from abolishing the practice of exposing their infant children and the eating of horse-flesh, soon subsided, and these last remnants of heathenism

were suppressed in consequence of the earnest remonstrance of St Olaf, king of Norway.* 1016.

The introduction of Christianity was followed by the abolition of trial by battle, a mode of procedure recognised by the early laws of all the Northern nations, and growing out of their warlike habits and wild spirit of independence, which made every individual the arbiter of his own wrongs. This mode of trial derived its name (Holmgánga) from the ancient usage among the Northern warriors, of retiring to a solitary island, there to decide their deadly feuds in single combat. The *Holmgánga* was abolished in Iceland in 1011. The laws of the island still remained in oral tradition until more than a century afterwards, when they were revised and reduced to a written text in 1117, under the superintendance of Bergthor Rafni, then Lagmann of the Republic, and Haflidi Mauri, another distinguished chieftain, who were assisted in this recompilation by experienced lawyers of the time. This code, afterwards called the Grágás, was adopted by the national assembly of the Al-thing in the following year, 1118, and preserved the force of law until the year 1275, when Iceland became subject to the kings of Norway. The loss of national independence was followed by the introduction of the Norwegian collection of laws, called Jonsbok, in 1280, which still continues to be the basis of the Icelandic legislation. The Grágás code was not, as has commonly been supposed, borrowed from the law of the same name, introduced into Norway by king Magnus the Good. It was founded mainly on the primitive laws of Ulfljot, and the

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, tom. i. pp. 540, 547. J. F. G. Schlegel, Comment. de Cod. Grágás, § 5.

revision of 1118; but in the form in which the Grágás now exists, it is intermingled with precedents of judicial decisions, and the glosses of different commentators which have been incorporated into the original text. This code abounds with many examples of that spirit of litigation and legal subtlety, which has ever marked the Norman character.

These laws contain the same provisions for the satisfaction of penal offences by pecuniary mulcts, which are adjusted by a minute scale, according to the nature of the crime and the rank of the offender. They also contain the rude elements of the trial by jury, of which there are many traces to be found in the ancient annals of the North. In the Saga of the famous chieftain Egill, son of Skallagrim, there is a curious and picturesque account of a civil trial in Norway, in the reign of king Erik Blodœxe, respecting an inheritance claimed by that
934 chieftain. Soon after the battle of Brunanburg, in which Egill had aided king Athelstane with a band of Vikingar, and other Northern adventurers, his wife's father died in Norway, and his brother-in-law Bergaumund took possession of the entire inheritance, of which Egill claimed a part, in right of his wife, which circumstance compelled Egill to make a voyage from Iceland to the parent country. On his arrival in Norway, he brought a suit against Bergaumund, who was protected by the interest of king Erik and his queen Gunilhda. The suit was tried at the Gule-thing assizes, where the parties appeared, attended by numerous bands of followers and friends. In the midst of a large field a ring was stretched out, with hazel twigs bound together with a cord, called a sacred band (*vebönd*). Within this circle sat the judges, twelve from the district called Fiorde-

fylke, twelve from Sogne-fylke, and twelve from Hörda-fylke; these three districts being thus united into what may be called one circuit for the administration of justice. The pleadings commenced in due form, and Bergaumund asserted that Egill's wife could not, as the child of a slave, inherit the property in question. But Egill's friend Arinbiœrn maintained, with twelve witnesses or compurgators that she was of ingenuous birth; and as the judges were about to pronounce sentence, queen Gunilhda, the old enemy of Egill, fearing the result might be favourable to him, instigated her kinsmen to cut the sacred cord, by which the assizes were broken up in confusion. Thereupon Egill defied his adversary to single combat in a desert isle (holmgánga) in order to decide their controversy by battle, and denounced vengeance against all who should interfere. King Erik was sorely incensed, but as nobody, not even the king and his Champions, were allowed to come armed to the assizes, Egill made his escape to the sea shore. Here his faithful friend Arinbiœrn informed him that he was declared an outlaw in all Norway, and presented him with a bark and thirty men to pass the seas. But Egill could not forego his vengeance, even for a season, and returned to the shore, where he lurked until he found an opportunity to slay not only his adversary Bergaumund, but king Erik's son Ragnvold, a youth of only eleven years old, whom he accidentally encountered at a convivial meeting in the neighbourhood. Before Egill set sail again for Iceland, he took one of the oars of his ship, upon which he stuck a horse's head, and as he raised it aloft, exclaimed: "Here I set up the rod of vengeance, and direct this curse against king Erik and queen Gunilhda!" He then turned the horse's head

towards the land, and cried aloud: "I direct this curse against the tutelary deities who built this land (*Snýek thessu nídi á landvœttir thær er thetta land byggia*) that they shall for ever wander, and find no rest nor abiding place, until they have expelled from the land king Erik and queen Gunilhda." He then carved this singular formula of imprecation in Runic characters upon the oar, and fixed it in a cleft of the rock, where he left it standing.*

* Egills-Saga, Havn. 1809, cap. lvii.—lx. Müller, Saga-bibliothek, tom. i. pp. 114—116.

CHAPTER IV.

Icelandic language and literature.—History and poetry preserved by oral tradition.—Skalds.—Their poetry influenced by the wild beauty of Northern scenery. — Saga-man, or story-teller.—Sæmund Sigfussen.—Compilation of the poetic or elder Edda.—Runic characters and writing.—Arrangement of the different Songs contained in Sæmund's Edda.—Mythology and Ethics of the ancient religion of the North.—Authenticity of the poetic Edda.—Prose Edda of Snorre Sturleson.—Skalda.—Icelandic versification.

UNDER the protection of this form of government, which might, however, more properly be called a patriarchal aristocracy than a republic, the Icelanders cherished and cultivated the language and literature of their ancestors with remarkable success. The cultivation of these was favoured by their adherence to the ancient religion for some time after all the other countries of the North had yielded to the progress of Christianity. The early dawn of literature in Europe was almost everywhere else marked by an awkward attempt to copy the classical models of Greece and Rome. In Iceland, an independent literature grew up, flourished, and was brought to a certain degree of perfection, before the revival of learning in the South of Europe. This island was not converted to Christianity until the end of the tenth century, when the national literature which still remained in oral tradition, was full blown and ready

to be committed to a written form. With the Romish religion, Latin letters were introduced; but instead of being used, as elsewhere, to write a dead language, they were adapted by the learned men of Iceland to mark the sounds which had been before expressed by the Runic characters. The ancient language of the North was thus preserved in Iceland, whilst it ceased to be cultivated as a written, and soon became extinct as a spoken language, in the parent countries of Scandinavia. The popular superstitions, with which the mythology and poetry of the North are interwoven, continued still to linger in the sequestered glens of this remote island. The language, which gave expression to the thoughts and feelings connected with this mythology and this poetry, bears in its internal structure a strong resemblance to the Latin and Greek, and even to the ancient Persian and Sanscrit, and according to the testimony of one of the greatest philologists of the age, rivals in copiousness, flexibility, and energy every modern tongue.*

Like those of most other barbarous nations, the Scandinavian learning and history were, as has already been remarked, preserved in oral tradition long before any attempt was made to reduce them to writing. Like the rhapsodists of ancient Greece, and the bards of the Celtic tribes, the Skalds were at once poets and his-

* The origin and structure of this remarkable language are fully explained by Professor Rask in a prize essay, crowned by the Royal Academy at Copenhagen, in 1818, a part of which has been translated by the late Professor Vater, in a work entitled *Vergleichungstafeln der Europæischen Sprachen, &c.*—In this essay, the affinity of the Icelandic language with the Greek and Latin, is traced both with respect to grammatical structure and inflection, and the richness of its copious vocabulary.

torians. They were the companions and chroniclers of kings, who liberally rewarded their genius, and sometimes entered the lists with them in trials of skill in their own art. A constant intercourse was kept up by the Icelanders with the parent country, and the Skalds were a sort of travelling minstrels, going continually from one Northern country to another. A regular succession of this order of men was perpetuated, and a list of two hundred and thirty in number, of those who were most distinguished in the three Northern kingdoms, from the reign of Ragnar Lodbrok to Valdemar II. is still preserved in the Icelandic language, among whom are several crowned heads and distinguished warriors of the heroic age. The famous king, Ragnar Lodbrok, his queen Aslög or Aslauga, and his adventurous sons, who distinguished themselves by their maritime incursions into France and England in the ninth century, were all Skalds. A sacred character was attached to this calling. The Skalds performed the office of ambassadors between hostile tribes, like the heralds of ancient Greece and of the Roman fecial law. Such was the estimation in which this order of men was held, that they often married the daughters of princes; and one remarkable instance occurs of a Skald, who was raised to the vacant Jutish throne, on the decease of Frode III, in the fourth century of the Christian æra.* The Skald accompanied his king to battle, and sung the achievements of which he was an eye-witness, and in which he was himself an actor. Thus the Saga of Olaf Tryggvason relates how that heroic king placed around him his Skalds on the day of battle, saying to them: "Now you shall sing, not merely what

* Græters Suhm, tom. i. p. 263.

you have heard from the reports of others, but that which you have seen with your own eyes." Starkother the Old was equally famous as a hero and a Skald; and in the account which Saxo-Grammaticus has borrowed from one of his lays of the celebrated battle of Bravalla, it is mentioned that Harald Hildetand was accompanied in that fatal fight by several Skalds. Egill, the son of Skalagrim, an Icelandic military adventurer, who entered the service of king Athelstane in England, redeemed his life when taken prisoner by his enemy, Erik Blodöxe, by composing a lay of twenty strophes in a great variety of measures in praise of that tyrant.* As there were female warriors, or Amazons, in the heroic age of the North, so there were female Skalds or poetesses, whose lays sometimes breathed the harsh notes of war and celebrated the achievements of conquering heroes, and at others sung the prophetic mysteries of religion.†

Several of the kings of Sweden entertained Icelandic Skalds, but it was at the courts of the Norwegian monarchs that they found the most hospitable reception and liberal patronage. Thus Harald Hárfager had always in his service four principal Skalds, who were the intimate companions of his leisure hours, and with whom he even counselled upon his most serious and important affairs. He assigned them the highest seats at the royal board, and gave them precedence over all his other courtiers. St Olaf, king of Norway, whose zeal against the pagan religion induced him to include the songs of the Skalds among the other inventions of

* Egills—Saga, cap. lxiii.

† Münter Kirchengeschichte von Dänemark und Norwegen, tom. i. p. 197.

the demon, and of whom the Skald Sigvat said 'he was unwilling to listen to any lay,'—deprived them of their accustomed precedence at his court. But such was the force of ancient feelings and prejudice, that this monarch continued to give them much of his confidence, and frequently employed them on the most important public missions. Nor could he suppress the wish that his own name might live in song, and he was accompanied to the field in the last fatal battle, which terminated his life and reign, by three of the most celebrated Icelandic Skalds of the time, to whom he assigned, in the midst of his bravest champions a conspicuous post, where they might be able distinctly to see and hear, and afterwards relate the events of the day. Thormod, one of these Skalds, dictated a lay, which the whole army sung after him, and which is still extant. Two of them fell dead by the king's side, and Thormod, though mortally wounded by an arrow, would not desert him, but still continued to chaunt the praises of the saintly king until he expired.*

Harald Hardráde was a critic in the Skaldic art, which he himself practised. An Icelandic Skald, called Jarlaskald, had composed two lays, one in praise of Magnus the Good, and the other of Harald himself. "I see well the difference," said the king, "between these two songs: mine will be forgotten as soon as learnt; but that in praise of Magnus shall live in the memory of men so long as the North continues to be inhabited."†

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Hinom Helga, cap. ccviii—cxxi. Müller, Saga—Bibliothek, tom. i. p. 157. Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 209.

† Torfæus, Hist. Norveg. part iii. lib. iv. cap. xiii.

Canute the Great retained several Skalds at his court, and Snorre Sturleson has inserted in his history of the kings of Norway, some fragments of their encomiastic lays on the monarch by whose bounty they were munificently rewarded. Among these was the Icelandic Skald Thoraren, who, having composed a short poem on Canute, "of the kind," says Snorre, "which we call *Flok*," went for the purpose of reciting it to the king, who was just rising from table, and thronged with suitors. The impatient poet craved an audience of the king for his lay, assuring him it was "very short." The wrath of Canute was kindled, and he answered the Skald with a stern look,—"Are you not ashamed to do what none but yourself has dared,—to write a short poem upon me:—unless by the hour of dinner to-morrow you produce a *drapa* above thirty strophes long on the same subject, your life shall pay the penalty." The inventive genius of the poet did not desert him: he produced the required poem, which was of the kind called *Tog-drapa*, and the king liberally rewarded him with fifty marks of silver.*

Thus we perceive how the flowers of poetry sprung up and bloomed amidst eternal ice and snows. The arts of peace were successfully cultivated by the free and independent Icelanders. Their Arctic isle was not warmed by a Grecian sun, but their hearts glowed with the fire of freedom. The natural divisions of the country by ice-bergs and lava streams, insulated the people from each other, and the inhabitants of each valley and each hamlet formed, as it were, an independent com-

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. clxxxi. Knytlingasaga, cap xix. p. 182. Ed. Rafn.

munity. These were again reunited in the general national assembly of the Al-thing, which might not be unaptly likened to the Amphyctionic council or Olympic games, where all the tribes of the nation convened to offer the common rites of their religion, to decide their mutual differences, and to listen to the lays of the Skald, which commemorated the exploits of their ancestors. Their pastoral life was diversified by the occupation of fishing. Like the Greeks, too, the sea was their element, but even their shortest voyages bore them much farther from their native shores than the boasted expedition of the Argonauts. Their familiarity with the perils of the ocean, and with the diversified manners and customs of foreign lands, stamped their national character with bold and original features, which distinguished them from every other people.*

The countries from which this branch of the great Northern family had migrated, were marked by equally striking moral and physical peculiarities.

'Wild the Runic faith,
And wild the realms where Scandinavian chiefs
And Skalds arose, and hence the Skald's strong verse
Partook the savage wildness. And methinks
Amid such scenes as these, the Poet's soul
Might best attain full growth; pine-cover'd rocks,
And mountain forests of eternal shade,
And glens and vales, on whose green quietness
The lingering eye reposes, and fair lakes
That image the light foliage of the beach,
Or the grey glitter of the aspen leaves
On the still bow thin trembling————.'†

* P. E. Müller, Sagabibliothek, Indledning. † Southey.

The wild beauty of the Northern scenery struck the poetic soul of Alfieri, as it must that of every other traveller of genius and sensibility. He was moved by the magnificent splendour of its winter nights, and, above all, by the rapid transition from the rudeness of that season to the mild bloom of spring.

'O 'tis the touch of fairy hand
That wakes the Spring of Northern land!
It warms not there by slow degrees,
With changeful pulse the uncertain breeze;
But sudden on the wondering sight
Bursts forth the beam of living light,
And instant verdure springs around,
And magic flowers bedeck the ground.'*

This, and the other distinctive qualities of the Northern climate and modes of life, act powerfully on the being of man; and, as has been beautifully observed by the distinguished living historian of Sweden, "draw the attention of Man to Nature, and create a closer relation to her, and to her mysteries. To this cause may also be attributed that peculiarly deep and comprehensive perception of Nature, which forms a fundamental principle in distinguished Northern minds; a tendency which, even in the earliest mythology and poetry of the North, expresses itself by dark images and tones, and in later times purified by cultivation, has been principally developed in sciences and art."†

The ancient literature of the North was not confined

* W. Herbert. † Geijr, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 47.

to the poetical art. The Skald recited the praises of kings and heroes in verse, whilst the Saga-man recalled the memory of the past in prose narratives. The talent for story-telling, as well as that of poetical invention, was cultivated and highly improved by practice. The prince's hall, the assembly of the people, the solemn feasts of sacrifice, all presented occasions for the exercise of this delightful art. The memory of past transactions was thus handed down from age to age in an unbroken chain of tradition, and the ancient songs and Sagas were preserved until the introduction of book-writing gave them a fixed and durable record. A young Icelander, Thorstein Frode, was entertained at the court of Harald Hardráde, as a Saga-man or story-teller, and often amused the king and his courtiers in this manner. As the great Jule festival, or Christmas approached, the king, observing him to become serious and melancholy, apprehended that his stock of stories might be nearly exhausted. On being asked the question, Thorstein confessed that he had indeed but a single story left, and that one he did not like to tell, because it related to the deeds of the king himself in foreign lands. Being encouraged by Harald, he at last narrated the story to the great satisfaction of the king, who asked him where he had learnt it. Thorstein answered that he had been in the constant habit of attending the Al-thing, or annual national assembly of Iceland, where he had heard different parts of this Saga at different times, until he had firmly imprinted it on his memory. The original narrator was one Haldor, an Icelander who had accompanied king Harald in all his travels and expeditions to Russia, Greece, Asia, Sicily and Palestine, and on his

return to his native isle, had spread the fame of the king's achievements among his countrymen.*

These recitations were embellished with poetical extracts from the *works* of different Skalds, if such an expression may be used for literary compositions before the art of book-writing was known, and quoted by the narrator as apt to the purpose of illuminating some remarkable passage in the life and exploits of the hero whose adventures he was relating. Story and song were thus united together, and the memory was strengthened by this constant cultivation, so as to be the safe depositary of the national history and poetry. A striking example of the degree to which this faculty was cultivated, is given in the Saga of a famous Icelandic Skald, who sung before king Harald Sigurdson sixty different lays in one evening, and, being asked if he knew any more, declared that these were only the half of what he could sing.†

The power of oral tradition, in thus transmitting, through a succession of ages, poetical or prose compositions of considerable length, may appear almost incredible to civilized nations accustomed to the art of writing. But it is well known, that even after the Homeric poems had been reduced to writing, the rhapsodists who had been accustomed to recite them, could readily repeat any passage desired. And we have, in our own times, among the Servians, Calmucks, and other barbarous and semi-barbarous nations, examples of heroic and popular poems of great length thus pre-

* Müller, Sagabibliothek, tom. i. p. 347. tom. iii. p. 330.

† Om Stuf Skald, Müller's Sagabibliothek, tom. iii. p. 377.

served and handed down to posterity. This is more especially the case where there is a perpetual order of men, whose exclusive employment it is to learn and repeat, whose faculty of the memory is thus improved and carried to the highest pitch of perfection, and who are relied upon as historiographers to preserve the national annals. The interesting scene presented to this day in every Icelandic family, in the long nights of winter, is a living proof of the existence of this ancient custom. No sooner does the day close, than the whole patriarchal family, domestics and all, are seated on their couches in the principal apartment, from the ceiling of which the reading and working lamp is suspended; and one of the family, selected for that purpose, takes his seat near the lamp, and begins to read some favourite Saga, or it may be the works of Klopstock and Milton, (for these have been translated into Icelandic) whilst all the rest attentively listen, and are at the same time engaged in their respective occupations. From the scarcity of printed books in this poor and sequestered country, in some families the Sagas are recited by those who have committed them to memory, and there are still instances of itinerant orators of this sort, who gain a livelihood during the winter by going about from house to house repeating the stories they have thus learnt by heart.*

About two centuries and a half after the first settlement of Iceland by the Norwegians, the learned men of that remote island began to collect and reduce to writing these traditional poems and histories. Sæmund Sigfussen, an ecclesiastic, who was born in Iceland in 1056,

* Henderson's Travels in Iceland, vol. 1. p. 366.

and pursued his classical studies in the universities of Germany and France, first collected and arranged the book of songs relating to the mythology and history of the ancient North, which is called the poetic, or elder *Edda.* Various and contradictory opinions have been maintained as to the manner in which this collection was made by Sæmund, who first gave it to the world. Some suppose that he merely gathered together the Runic manuscripts of the different poems, and transcribed them in Latin characters. Others maintain that he took them from the mouths of different Skalds, living in his day, and first reduced them to writing, they having been previously preserved and handed down by oral tradition merely. But the most probable conjecture seems to be, that he collected some of this fragmentary poetry from cotemporary Skalds and other parts from manuscripts written after the introduction of Christianity and Latin letters into Iceland, which have since been lost, and merely added one song of his own composition, the *Sólar Ljód,* or Carmen-Solare, of a moral and Christian religious tendency, so as thereby to consecrate and leaven, as it were, the whole mass of paganism.* He thus performed for these ancient poems the same office, which, according to the theory proposed by Wolf and Heyne, was performed by the ancient Greek rhapsodist (whoever he was), who first collected and arranged the songs of his predecessors, and reduced them to one continuous poem, which bears the name of Homer's Iliad. It should, however, be observed, that the different lays contained in Sæmund's Edda, are not, in general, connected together as one continuous poem in point of subject and compo-

* Afzelius, Proem. Edda Sæmundar, &c. Holmiæ, 1818.

sition, but consist of different pieces of ancient fragmentary poetry, relating to the characters and exploits of the Northern deities and heroes. There is abundant internal evidence that the work, with the exception just mentioned, was not of his own composition, or that of any other Christian writer;* and that the poems contained in it could not have been collected by him, or by anybody else, from *Runic* manuscripts, will be evident from the following considerations.

The Runic alphabet consists properly of sixteen letters, which are Phenician in their origin. The Northern traditions, sagas, and songs, attribute their introduction to Odin. They were probably brought by him into Scandinavia, but they have no resemblance to any of the alphabets of central Asia. All the ancient inscriptions to be found on the rocks and stone monuments in the countries of the North, and which exist in the greatest number near old Sigtuna and Upsala, in Sweden, the former the residence of Odin, and the latter of his successors, and the principal seat of the superstition introduced by him, are written in the Icelandic or ancient Scandinavian language, but in Runic characters. Saxo Grammaticus, who wrote in the twelfth century, asserts that the ancient Danes engraved verses upon rocks and stones, containing accounts of the exploits of their ancestors. But he does not pretend to cite any Runic inscriptions of the sort; and though he speaks of the

* See the victorious refutation of the German hypothesis, that the Eddaic poems were forged by the Northern monks during the middle ages, by the learned Professor P. E. Müller, 'Ueber die Aechtheit der Asalehre und den Werth der Snorroischen Edda,' Copenhagen, 1811.

rock on which king Harald Hildetand had caused the achievements of his heroic father to be inscribed, he admits, that when Valdemar I. endeavoured to copy this lapidary inscription, it was found for the most part effaced and illegible. It is probable that the zeal of the first converts to Christianity was employed in destroying these monuments, which they considered rather as the works of the demon, than as contributing to illustrate the exploits of their Pagan ancestors, whose fame was far from being held in honour by them. The Runic characters were also used for inscriptions on arms, trinkets, amulets, utensils, and buildings, and occasionally on the bark of trees or wooden tablets, for the purpose of memorials or epistolary correspondence. Thus Venantius Fortunatus, a Latin poet of the sixth century, asks his friend Flavius, if he is tired of the Latin, to write him in Hebrew, Persian, Greek, or even Runic characters.

> Barbara fraxineis pingatur *Runa* tabellis,
> Quodque papyrus ait, virgula plana valet;
> Pagina vel redeat perscripta dolatile charta,
> Quod relegi poterit, fructus amantis erit.

And the biographer of St Ancharius, the great apostle of the North, speaks of a letter written in the ninth century in Runic characters, by a king of Sweden, to the emperor Louis le Debonnaire. These characters were also used for purposes connected with the pretended art of magic, and their efficacy in this respect is inculcated by Odin in several passages of the fragmentary poetry collected by Sæmund. Saxo Grammaticus speaks of magical songs carved on wooden tablets, and in the Saga of the famous Skald and hero Egill, it is,

related how he was so deeply afflicted with the death of his beloved son, that he resolved to starve himself to death, when he was diverted from his fatal purpose by his daughter persuading him to dictate an elegiac lay to his son's memory, which she offered to carve in wood *på Kafle.* But the Runic characters were principally used for lapidary inscriptions, and for the other purposes already mentioned, and there is no evidence that any such thing as *books*, properly so called, existed among the Scandinavian nations, before the introduction of the religion and language of the Romish church. The oldest manuscript book in the Runic characters now existing is a digest of the customary laws of Scania, written in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, which is preserved in the library of the university of Copenhagen.*

The original text of the poetical Edda, with a Latin inscription, notes, glossary, &c. was begun to be published at Copenhagen in 1787. One volume of these very ancient and curious books was issued in that year, under the superintendance of the learned men composing what is called the Royal Arna-Magnœan commission, to whom is confided a collection of Icelandic manuscripts, now preserved in the library of the Copenhagen university. This collection was bequeathed to the university by Arne Magnussen, or as the name is Latinized, Arnus Magnœus, a native Icelander, eminently skilled in the literature of his country, who flourished in the beginning of the last century. A second volume was published in 1818, which contains principally mythic-historical poems connected with the German Niebelungenlied. A third volume has recently been published by Professor Finn Magnussen,

* Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 134—185.

which contains three mythological songs, with a learned critical apparatus, and a lexicon of the ancient Northern mythology, compared with the religious systems and rites of other nations, such as the Germans, Persians, Hindús, &c. with a view of the popular superstitions, customs, and manners, connected with the remnants of the ancient pagan religion, which are still to be traced in the ancient North. Professor Magnussen, who is a native Icelander, celebrated for his unrivalled attainments in this curious lore, has also published a separate translation of the songs of the elder Edda, in modern Danish, with explanatory notes. Another edition of the original of this Edda was published by Professor Rask and the Rev. Mr Afzelius, at Stockholm, in 1818, the text of which differs but little from the large Copenhagen edition mentioned above, except in being more accurately accented, having the *i* distinguished from *j*,—*u* from *v*,—*ö* from *o*,—&c., and being, of course, more legible to persons who have a tolerable knowledge of the common Icelandic. The songs are also placed in an order nearer to the original arrangement, and divided into two parts, the first of mythological, the second of heroical songs.

The poems contained in the elder Edda may be classified according to their subjects and style as follows: 1. The mystical. 2. The mythic-didactic. 3. The purely mythological. 4. The mythic-historical.

The first of the classes in this arrangement includes the *Völu-spa*—the oracle or prophecy of Vala, which contains a sort of abstract of the mythological system of the Edda, in a very dark, mysterious, and often unintelligible style, resembling the Sibylline verses. The Scandinavians, like the ancient Germans, attached ideas of mysterious sanctity to the female sex, who were much

employed in the offices and ceremonies of religion. Tacitus mentions a celebrated prophetess of the name of *Veleda*, whose oracles were consulted and implicitly followed by the German tribe among which she was venerated. Horace alludes to an Italian Sybil whose name approaches still nearer to that of Vola or Vala, and in Icelandic the name is a generic term applied to Sybils or female prophets.*

The Völu-Spá gives a short account of the creation of the universe, and of the gods and men by whom it is inhabited, according to the cosmogony of the Eddas, and the death of Odin's son, Balder, the god of day, who is lamented by all the deities, whose tears and prayers could not avert his doom. His body is burnt on the funeral pile, with that of Nanna, his lovely bride, who had died of a broken heart, and with his horse and arms, like those of the ancient heroes of the North. His funeral obsequies are to be followed by the destruction of the universe by fire, typified in the god Sutur, the Northern Pluto.

'The sun all black shall be,
The earth sink in the sea,
And ev'ry starry ray,
From heav'n fade away;
While vapours hot shall fill
The air round Ygdrasil,
And flaming as they rise,
Play towering to the skies.'

After which a new heaven and a new earth shall appear, whilst two individuals of the human race, saved from the general destruction, shall perpetuate their species in the

* Tac. Germ. viii. Hor. Epod. v. 42.

world thus renovated, Balder shall return again from the dark abodes of Hela, and reign triumphant in the mansion of the gods, once more restored to its ancient magnificence and splendour. This beautiful mythos is doubtless an image of the life of the seasons, and has reference to the celebration of the ancient festival called *Midsumers-blót* in the ancient language of the North, when the days, having reached their extreme length, begin to shorten, soon bring in their train the dog-star's burning ray, and are followed in these Northern climates, in a short transition, by the winter's cold, when all nature is wrapt in a death-like sleep, which is again succeeded by the renovating spring.* But at the same time, it probably carries with it another, a more remote and a higher signification, being, to use the words of the eloquent historian of Sweden, "a symbol of all Time, of the changes of the great Year of the World, representing the general dissolution of all things as a consequence of the first God's Death—the death of Goodness and Justice in the world. Balder returns, followed by reward and punishment, by a new heaven and a new earth. Through the truth thus inculcated, and at the same time the inviolable sanctity which the Northern mythology attaches to an oath, it rises above mere Nature and acquires a moral value for mankind."†

The second Eddaic poem of the mystical class is the *Grougaldor*, or Groa's Magic Song, which contains a collection of magical terms, supposed to be useful in every sort of peril and other exigencies of human life. Odin and his followers from the East found the arts of magic

* Finn Magnussen, Edda Sæmundi, part iii. Introd. p. 8.

† Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 354.

professed and practised among the primitive inhabitants of the North, whose religion he reformed or superseded. The magic of the Runic characters and songs which he introduced proved stronger than that of the Finns or Laplanders, whose art he endeavoured to depreciate as the invention of demons, under the name of *black* magic, whilst he dignified his own by the epithet of the Kingly art. It is probable that these two schools of magical art became ultimately blended together, and they left deep traces of their effects upon national manners, which even the introduction of Christianity did not entirely obliterate. The ancient popular belief in magic and witchcraft was confirmed by the sanctions of the new dispensation introduced by the Æsir. The Northern warrior "bore a charmed life,"—was rendered invulnerable to the weapons of his enemy, whilst his own offensive arms carried sure destruction into the ranks of his foe, whose best directed efforts he could palsy with magical incantations.* The women had a prineipal share in the mysterious rites connected with this pretended art, and the ingredients of their magic cauldron were compounded in the same manner with that of the witches of Shakspeare's Macbeth, which indeed may be considered as a true living picture of this superstition so widely diffused over all the countries of the North. Associations or brotherhoods of magicians were formed, in which some of the principal chieftains

* He could terrify his enemies in battle so that they would run mad, and drop their innocuous weapons to the ground; he could protect his body against any wounds or other perils, *e. g.* against exhaustion in swimming, against fire, &c. See *Rúnacapitúli*, at the end of Hava-mál, in Sæmund's Edda, Brynhildurquida, and other Eddaic songs,—Orvarodds Saga, &c.

of the country were engaged. In the reign of Harald Hárfager, his son, Rognvald Kettilbein, put himself at the head of such an order of magicians. The king having vainly endeavoured to reclaim him and his eighty confederates from their odious practices, was so incensed against them that he invited them to a feast, and when they were drenched with wine and wassail, set fire to the house in which they were assembled, and not one of them escaped with his life.*

The third of these mystical lays is called the *Sólar Ljód*, or Song of the Sun, which is almost entirely of Sæmund's own composition, but imitated from the ancient heathen fragmentary poetry, with an application to ideas, evidently derived from a Christian source, respecting the future life, and the dwellings and occupations of departed souls.

The first of the Edda songs, which may not improperly be termed mythic-didactic, is the *Vafthrudnis-mál*, which, like many other ancient writings of this sort, is in the form of a dramatic dialogue. Odin, the father of the gods, proposes to visit one of the famous Giants or Genii, (the original Icelandic word is *Jötun*, signifying one of the Finnish race, antagonists of the gods or demigods, the *Æsir*,) for the purpose of comparing the extent of their respective attainments in sacred science, and consults his spouse, the goddess Frigga, 'to whom the future is known,' upon the subject of his intended enterprize. She, with true feminine prudence, advises him to remain at home, where he is safe in the celestial mansion, 'for no one of the genii is to be compared with Vafthrudnir in craft and valour.' But Odin per-

* Schœning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. ii. pp. 198—200.

sisting in his resolution, Frigga vouchsafes him a favourable augury, and bids him be wise for her sake and that of the other deities, whose fate was indissolubly linked with his. Odin sets forth on his journey in the disguise of a mortal, and comes to the hall of this Giant, celebrated for his knowledge of sacred mysteries, which he approaches, and discovers that the master is at home.

" ODIN.

" Hail, Vafthrudnir! I have at last reached thy mansion; but before I enter, first, I would know whether thou art indeed that wise and omniscient Genius."

" VAFTHRUDNIR.

" Who is this mortal, who thus accosts me in my palace? Unless thy wisdom exceed mine, thou shalt never go hence."

" ODIN.

" Gagnráder is my name. I have been long on the road, and am both hungry and thirsty: I demand hospitality, Genius!"

" VAFTHRUDNIR.

" Why then, Gagnráder, do'st thou remain at the threshold? Come and take a seat in the hall, and we shall soon see who of the two is the wisest, the guest or the old speaker."

" ODIN.

" The poor man who enters the rich man's door should be frugal of his words."

" VAFTHRUDNIR.

" Tell me then, Gagnráder, if thou wouldst give a specimen of thy science, the name of that horse who drags the Car of Day over the heads of mortals?"

" ODIN.

" *Skinfaxi* is the horse called, who drags the Car of Day over the heads of mortals,—the fleetest among horses, with the ever-shining mane."

" VAFTHRUDNIR.

" Tell me, Gagnráder, if indeed thou wouldst give a specimen of thy science, the name of the horse who drags the Car of Night over the heads of the beneficent Deities?"

" ODIN.

" *Hrímfaxi* is the horse called, who drags the Car of Night over the heads of the beneficent Deities, and the foam which distils from his mouth is the Dew of Morning."

The Genius, finding from the readiness of his guest in thus naming and describing Lucifer, Hesperus, and the other stars, that he had an antagonist worthy to enter the lists with him, invites Odin to take a seat by his side, and engage in a disputation upon the mysteries of sacred science, with this singular condition, that the losing party should forfeit his head! Then begins the keen encounter of their wits, and Odin (who still keeps his *incognito*,) commences the digladiation by asking the Genius, whence proceed the earth and the heavens: who answers very learnedly and correctly, that the

earth was created from the flesh of *Ymir*,—the rocks (primitive, transition, and all,) from his bones,—the heavens, from his skull,—the clouds, from his brain, and the sea, from his blood. Under this mythic imagery is typified the creation of the external world, from *Chaos*, figured under the form of the giant *Ymir*. The God proceeds to interrogate the Genius, (numbering his questions like a Chancery lawyer,) upon the most puzzling points of cosmogony and theogony,—whence proceed Day and Night, Winter and Summer,—the creation of the human race, &c. His eleventh interrogatory regards the condition of departed spirits, and he enquires respecting the nature of the occupations of the heroes, who, having perished by a violent death, were alone thought worthy to enjoy the felicity of Odin's *Valhalla*. The Genius answers that they are daily engaged in martial exercises and tournaments, similar to those in which they were employed on earth, and encounter each other in battle, in which real blows and even mortal wounds are dealt, and many are left dead on the field of blood; but at the signal for the banquet, they arise, and march with the rest to the hall of Odin, to share in the feast prepared for them, and to quaff the liquor of the gods, and converse together in peace. These tournaments and feasts were to continue to the end of the present world. The disguised deity then pursues his enquiries respecting the destruction of the universe, and the new creation by which it is to be followed. He asks what is to become of Odin himself in this final consummation of all things. To which Vafthrudnir readily replies, that Fenrir, the Wolf, shall devour the 'Father of Ages,' (Odin) and the whole world, with all things therein, both gods and men,

shall be involved in one general conflagration. The pretended Gagnráder at last asks the Genius 'what are the words which Odin whispered in the ear of his son, Balder, when the latter was placed upon his funeral pile.' Whereupon the astonished Genius recognizes Odin, and acknowledges himself vanquished in this intellectual combat.

"VAFTHRUDNIR.

"No mortal man those words can know, which THOU whisperedst in the ear of thy son at the Beginning of Ages. I read my doom, written in magic characters and decreed by the celestial fates, for having dared to encounter the all-wise Odin in sacred controversy."

The next poem of this class, contained in the collection of the elder Edda, is *Grímnis-mál*, or the Song of Grímner, which contains a description of the habitations of the celestial deities, and the different objects to be found there. It is introduced by a short prose narrative, to the following effect. King Hrödúngr had two sons, named Agnar and Geirrövdr, the former ten years old and the latter eight, when they went to sea in a boat, for the purpose of fishing. A storm drove the boat far from the shore, and carried them to a strange country, where they met a certain rustic, with whom they spent the winter. The mistress of the house loved Agnar, but Geirrövdr was the favorite of her husband. In the following spring, they led the boys to the sea coast and gave them a barque, whilst the man whispered something privately to Geirrövdr. The boys set sail with a favorable wind, and reached their own country, when Geirrövdr, standing on the head of the boat,

leaped on shore, and pushed the boat off, saying to his brother, 'now go where the evil Genii may meet with thee.' The boat was carried out again to sea, but Geirrövdr, going home, was kindly received, and made king in his own country. Now, it came to pass, that Odin and Frigga, sitting in their celestial abode of Hlidskialfa, beheld all the regions of the earth. 'See,' said Odin, 'your favorite Agnar, sitting in a cavern, with his gigantic wife and children around him, whilst my Geirrövdr is become a king, and reigns in peace in his own country.' Frigga answered, 'your favorite, Geirrövdr, is avaricious, and cruel to his guests when he thinks too many claim from him the rites of hospitality.' Odin denied the charge, and they laid a wager concerning it. But Frigga artfully sent the nymph Fulla to admonish the king, lest a certain magician, who was coming into his country, should poison him, informing him that he might be known by the sign that no dog would bark at his approach. Odin, taking the name of Grimner, went to visit the Gothic king, but was suspected and seized as a magician. The king questioned him by torture between two fires, for eight nights, but Grímner constantly refused to answer. At this time Geirrövdr had a son, ten years old, called Agnar, after his uncle, who took compassion on the supposed magician, and gave him a cup of cold water to quench his burning thirst. Grimner then begins his lay, in which he predicts that Agnar shall sway the sceptre of the Goths, as a reward for his goodness. He then describes, in strains of wild and mysterious poetry, the twelve abodes of the gods, with the different objects they contain, which are supposed to be intended to represent the twelve signs of the zodiac, and other physical

emblems of the eternal world. At last, the god reveals himself, and king Geirrövdr, who was sitting with his sword upon his knee half unsheathed, starts up to release him from the torturing flames, and, stumbling, falls upon the point of his own sword. He immediately expires, Odin vanishes, and Agnar succeeds to the vacant throne of the Goths.

Alvís-mál, is the Song of Alvis, a dwarf, who had been promised the daughter of Thor, and comes to reclaim his bride, but is detained by the artifice of the cunning god all night, answering the various questions he puts to him concerning the various lands, or worlds, he had visited. The dwarf makes a display of his knowledge of the different names of the objects of nature, in the various languages of the deities, men, giants, dwarfs, and fairies, thus collecting a sort of dictionary of poetical and mythological sinonymes, for the instruction and amusement of his celestial host. The dwarf was thus detained until morning, and, being one of those genii who shun the light of day, was obliged to depart without his promised bride.

Hyndlu-Ljód, or the Song of Hyndla, is an obscure and imperfect lay, containing the genealogies of some ancient kings of the North, who were supposed to be descended from the gods.

Fjölsvinns-mal, or the story of Fjölsvinnr, is in the form of a dramatic dialogue, in which a great variety of mythological personages and objects are introduced, most of which is exceedingly dark and obscure, on account of our imperfect knowledge of the ancient system of mythology to which it relates.

The *Háva-mál*, or sublime discourse of Odin, contains a metrical collection of moral precepts, not unlike

the Proverbs of Solomon, the Pythagorean Carmina Aurea, or Hesiod's Works and Days. It embraces also other fragmentary poetry, of an allegorical character, and terminates with what is called the Runic chapter, in which Odin is represented as detailing the power of various charms composed of Runes, as adequate to heal diseases, counteract poison, to enchant the arms of an enemy, so as to render him impotent in battle, to still the rising tempest, to stop the career of witches as they ride through the air; and he even boasts, that by these magic spells he could raise the dead, and hold converse with them respecting the secrets of the invisible world.

The *Háva-mál* is valuable as a record of ancient manners and customs; many of the precepts contained in it savour rather of worldly prudence than of disinterested virtue, of calculating cunning than exalted wisdom. Thus the joys of social intercourse, and the pleasures of the festive board, are highly lauded, and formal rules are laid down for exercising the rites of hospitality in the most agreeable manner: but the 'unbidden guest' is counselled to 'remain discreetly silent, listening with his ears, and observing with his eyes; for caution is the better part of wisdom.'

"Sojourn not long in the same place; he who remains too long in the house of another, becomes a burthen to his host."

"Mock not the stranger guest, for thou knowest not who he may be."

Temperance in eating and drinking is inculcated, for "the beasts of the field know when to return home from their pasture, but the appetite of man is insatiable." This precept is connected with various prudential coun-

sels relating to domestic economy and the duty of self-preservation.

"A secret can only be safely kept by a single person, not by two; what three men know is no longer a secret."

"Go not into the field unarmed, nor leave the high way; for no man knows when he may have a use for his spear."

"He who seeks to spoil another's flock, or to take his life, must rise with the early dawn; the sleeping wolf takes no prey, and the sluggard man wins not the victory."

The duties of friendship, as here taught, are mainly founded on the principle of selfishness.

"Once I was young, I went alone, and lost my way; but when I found a companion, I seemed to be rich; for man is the joy of man. The tree which stands alone in the field puts not forth; so it is with him whom no one loves. Why should he longer live?"*

"Be thou the friend of thy friend, and of his friend: but no man should be the friend of his enemy's friend."

"Hast thou a friend in whom thou confidest, and from whom thou desirest to obtain something, mingle thy heart with his, exchange gifts with him, and visit him oft. The untrodden way is soon overgrown with grass."

"But hast thou a friend in whom thou confidest not, but wouldst obtain some favour from him, speak to him with soft words, but think cunningly, and render him falsehood for falsehood."

"I have never found a man so liberal and so magnificent, that he disdained to receive gifts."

* The same thought, expressed in the same manner, is found in the Sanskrit poem called *Maha Barata*.

"Put not thy trust in a woman's word; the heart of woman is versatile as the turning-wheel with which it was formed, and deceit nestles in her bosom."

"He who would win a virgin's heart, must whisper to her fair words, praise her beauty, and offer her rich gifts."

The utility of knowledge, and the nature of true wisdom, as understood by the author of this collection, are pointed out in a variety of sententious aphorisms, and a due value is set up upon life and its attendant blessings. At the same time, the fleeting nature of riches, and all things human, is well expressed.

"Better is it to live in misery, than not to live at all; to be blind, than to be laid on the funeral pile."

"The late-born child is the most precious: few are the memorials of the dead standing by the way-side, unless raised by the son to the father's memory."

"Riches pass away in the twinkling of an eye; the most inconstant of friends are they."

"I have seen the chambers of the rich man filled with goods, and I have seen his children begging their bread."

"The foolish man thinks to avoid his doom if he escapes the perils of war; but old age will put an end to his life, though he be safe from the spear."

"Flocks and herds perish, friends and relations die, we ourselves must die; but one thing I know which never perishes,—the fame of the good man."

The purely mythological poems are, 1. *Hýmisquida*, or the Song of Hymer, which describes a feast given by the sea-god Ægir, at which nearly all deities of the Northern Olympus take part, and Ægir, having no cauldron to brew the beer in, the god Thor goes to

borrow one of the giant Hymer. 2. *Ægis—Drecka*, or *Loka-Glespa*, the feast of Ægis, or the strife of *Loki*, who is the evil principle of this mythology, and is represented with many of the characteristics of the ancient Momus, or the Mephistopheles of Goethe. 3. *Hamarsheimt*, or the song of Thrym, upon the recovery of Thor's mallet, which had been stolen by the Jötnar, the giants, or genii, enemies of the gods. This lay has been translated into English verse by the Hon. W. Herbert, in his Select Icelandic poetry. 4. *Harbards-Ljód*, in the form of a dialogue between *Harbard*, who is represented as a sort of Charon, and the god Thor, whom the ferryman refuses to transport across the flood. This allegory is probably intended to represent the struggle between the opposite elements of nature. 5. *Hrafnagulder Odins*, or Odin's Raven Song, is the lament of the celestial deities upon their own approaching destruction, with that of the universe, and their mission to the other world, to consult the fates upon this momentous question. 6. *Skirnis-För*, or the Journey of Skirnir, in which Freyr, the son of Niordr, is represented as sitting in the celestial abode on high, and beholding a fair virgin of *Jötunheim* (the abode of the giants or genii, enemies of the celestial deities), as she passed through her father's house to a solitary apartment, is seized with a sudden sadness. Niordr, his father, bids Skirnir, who was the servant of Freyr, to enquire into the cause of his master's grief. Freyr confesses that he is enamoured of the Jötun maid, and Skirnir offers to go and solicit her hand for his master, if he will give him the courser of etherial breed that may carry him through the mysterious fire surrounding the abode of the virgin, and that sword of celestial temper that fights of itself with the

giants (i. e. the foes of the celestial deities). Skirnir addresses his steed somewhat in the style of Mezentius to his horse Phœbus, and sets off on his perilous journey. This adventure is continued in a dramatic dialogue, consisting of forty-four strophes, in which the Skirner and Genii are the interlocutors, and which, considered merely as poetry, is extremely beautiful, and for the student of the Edda mythology, is pregnant with meaning, which has been amply developed by the learned commentators.

In the *Vegtams-quidá*, Odin is represented as mounting his horse *Sleipner*, one of the foul brood of the evil spirit *Loke*, and descending into the infernal regions to evoke the spirit of a deceased *Vala*, or prophetess, with Runic incantations, and to compel her to reveal the fate of Balder, and other future events, respecting which the gods were in doubt and alarm.

It is this passage which Gray has finely paraphrased in the lines beginning:—

'Uprose the king of men with speed,
And saddled straight his coal-black steed;
Down the yawning steep he rode,
That leads to Hela's dread abode.'

* * * * * *

But a more exact idea may be formed of the Icelandic original, in the following close translation of the subsequent lines proposed by the Hon. Mr Spencer:—

'The dog he met from hell advancing;
His adverse breast with blood was clotted,
His jaws for combat keenly grinning;
Fierce he bay'd the spell's dread father,
Oped his huge throat, and howl'd long after.
On rode Odin; the deep earth sounded;

He reached the lofty house of Hela;
Ugger rode to the eastern portals,
There he knew was the tomb of Vala.
Strange verse he sung the slain enchanting,
Traced mystic letters northward looking.'*

* * * * * *

As to the origin of the preceding poems, there are several of them which betray their birth-place in their subjects and imagery, their mythology and style, which have all the forms and colouring of the East. Such are the Völu-spá, Vafthrudnis-mál, Grimnis-mál, Alvis-mál, Hrafna-galdur Odins, and Vegtamsquida, which are full of internal evidence that they were composed in a period of remote antiquity, and in regions less removed from the cradle of the human race, than the Scandinavian North. But Hýmis-quida, Hamars-heimt, Skirnis-för, Hyndlu-ljód, and others of that class, belong to the inspiration of the Northern muse, abounding in allusions to the local scenery and circumstances of the countries neighbouring the Arctic circle. The oldest of this fragmentary poetry may be compared to the organic remains —the wrecks of a more ancient world, or to the gigantic ruins of Egypt and Hindostan, speaking a more perfect civilization, the glories of which have long since departed. They may even be regarded as exhibiting traces of a purer religious dispensation, the light of which once shone upon the primitive inhabitants of the earth, but which has since been obscured by the dark clouds of superstition. "Thus," says the historian of Sweden, "sounds the voice of the Northern prophetess—the *Vala*, to us obscure and indistinct, through the darkness of ages. It

* Miscellaneous Poetry, vol. i. p. 50.

speaks of other times, of other men and ideas, fettered, indeed, by the bonds of superstition, but longing after eternal light, and, however imperfectly, expressing that longing. In this doctrine we may also recognise some of those "mighty sounds," of which the Greek poet, Pindar, while fixing attention to the remembrance of noble deeds, sings, "that they wander eternally over earth and sea." Such are the voices with which heaven and earth announce an eternal being and their own mortality, which no Paganism has expressed more strongly than the Northern. It also thereby alludes (however darkly) to the Mighty One on High, who is above those deities who are nourished and strengthened by the powers of the earth, the cooling of the sea, and the hydromel of the Skalds, to One mightier than the Mighty, whom they dare not name,—to "the unknown God,"—whom the Athenians also, according to St Paul, "ignorantly worshipped."*

The mythic-historical lays consist of the *Völundar-Quida*, known to the reader of modern Danish poetry, by the beautiful imitation of Œlenschläger, under the title of *Vaulundar-Saga*, and upwards of twenty other connected songs, forming a cyclus of heroic poems similar to the old Teutonic epic, the *Nibelungenlied*, which however is much more modern in the form, at least, in which it exists at present. The wonderful fortunes of the famous artist Völundr, the Northern Dædalus,—the adventures of Dietrich, or Theodoric, of Berne, the mirror of Teutonic chivalry,—of Sigurdr, or Siegfried and his father Sigmund, and other heroes of romance,—and the history, fabled or true, of Attila and his Huns,

* Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 339, 340.

make the subject of the Eddaic lays as well as of the German poem. But in the Scandinavian songs, the personages assume a much more mythologic character, their adventures are closely connected with the religion of Odin and his Goths, and with the lives and actions of the Northern heroes. The scene is infinitely diversified, and includes the complicated history of the Franks, Huns, and Burgundians, in their various wanderings, wars, and conquests on the breaking up of the Roman empire. Not only was the great Scandinavian family which occupied the peninsula now forming the kingdoms of Sweden and Norway, and the isles of the Baltic and the Northern ocean, knit together by the most intimate ties of a common origin and religion, language, manners, laws, and government, but it was closely blended with the fortunes of the Franks, Saxons, and other Teutonic tribes, in the same manner as the Dorians, Ionians, and other cognate nations of ancient Greece, were mutually connected together. Hence their poetic and mythic fictions bear a strong analogy to each other, and hence the resemblance between their early heroic and popular poetry. This cyclus of epic lays has all the interest of a complicated drama, from the variety of events, and of characters which are introduced and portrayed with exquisite skill; the scene continually changing from one country to another, and in which might be found the materials of many tragedies and tragic romances. The beautiful allegory of the dragon who conceals the treasure, and transmitting it from hand to hand, makes it the continual stimulus of new crimes, of constantly increasing atrocity, and illustrates the dreadful power of the *auri sacra fames* over the heart of man, is the same in the Teutonic as in the Scandinavian collection. Such, too,

is the story of the heroine who is represented in the *Godrúnar-quida en fyrsta* (or first lay of Gudrúna), as standing by the dead body of her husband Sigurdr, who had been treacherously murdered by her brother Gunnar, immoveable in her resolution not to survive him, and refusing to be comforted. The illustrious Jarls, 'famed for wisdom,' and noble women, 'girt with gold,' crowd around her, and vainly strive to console her deep-seated grief, and divert her fatal purpose. She sheds not a single tear, but remains a fixed picture of silent despair, whilst her female friends and companions endeavour to suggest topics of consolation from their own calamities and sufferings. Among these, Giaflaûga tells of her having followed to the grave five husbands, two daughters, and three sisters. Herborga, a queen of Hungary, has a sudden tale of woe to relate. She had lost seven sons, with her husband, slain in battle, and her father, mother, and four brothers, buried in a watery grave within a year; had been taken captive in war, and carried into slavery, where she was compelled 'to loose and unloose the shoe-latchets' of the chief's wife, by whom she had been made prisoner, and to perform other menial offices, similar to those anticipated by Andromache in her parting speech to Hector. Still Gudrúna cannot weep, until they are about to remove the dead body of her husband; when Gulrand, Gjúke's daughter, takes off his robe, and disclosing his gaping wounds, Gudrúna desires to take the last kiss—

'With hurrying hand from Sigurd's bier
Swept she then the pall away:
"On him, thy love, look, Gudrun dear,
To his cold lip thy warm lip lay,
And round him as they still could hold
Thy living lord, thine arms enfold."

'Gudruna turn'd—one hurried glance
On that much loved form she threw—
A moment view'd, where murder's lance
Had pierced the breast to her so true;
Saw stiff with blood these locks of gold,
And quench'd that eye so bright, so bold.

'She saw, and sank, and low reclined,
Hid in the couch her throbbing head;
Her loose veil floated unconfined,
Her burning cheek was crimson'd red:
Then, her bursting heart's relief,
Copious fell the shower of grief.'*

This tragic story, which bears to the cyclus of ancient Northern poetry a relation similar to that which the crimes and sufferings of the houses of Laius and Atreus did to the poetry of the Greeks, ends by the departure of Gudrúna to seek an asylum with one of her friends in Denmark; but Brynhilda, the lover of Sigurdr, will not survive the hero. She commands eight of her male slaves, and five females, to be slain, and falls upon her own sword.

In the Teutonic lay, that heroine is represented as a mere mortal virgin; but in the Icelandic poem,† she becomes a mythic personage, and, at the same time, the daughter of Budle, king of the Saxons and Franks, living in a lonely castle, encircled by magic flames. Sigurdr, journeying to the South towards Franconia, sees, upon a high mountain, a flaming light. As he approaches it, he enters a valley, and beholds what he supposes to be a warrior in full armour, sleeping on the ground. Sigurdr takes off the helmet of the slumberer,

* Conybeare's Anglo-Saxon Poetry, Introd. p. 48.
† Brinhildar-quida.

and discovers that she is an Amazon. Her armour clings to her body, so that he is obliged to cut it off with his sword, when she arises from this deathlike sleep, and enquires who has unbound the spell in which she lay entranced. Sigurdr informs her who he is, when she hails, in mystic strains, the cheerful light of day, pours libations to the fruitful Earth and the other deities, and tells him that she is a Valkyria, employed by Odin to watch the fate of battle, and assign the victory to whom the god had decreed it; she had unadvisedly interfered in the combat between two kings, to one of whom Odin had promised the victory, but she gave it to the other by slaying his adversary. Whereupon, the god struck her with his soporific wand, and, commanding her never more to engage in war, condemned her to be married!

'O strange is the bower where Brynhilda reclines,
Around it the watch-fire high bickering shines!
Her couch is of iron, her pillow a shield,
And the maiden's chaste eyes are in deep slumber seal'd.
Thy charm, dreadful Odin, around her is spread,
From thy wand the dread slumber was pour'd on her head.
O whilom in battle, so bold and so free,
Like a *Vikingr* victorious she rov'd o'er the sea.
The love-lighting eyes, which are fetter'd by sleep,
Have seen the sea-fight raging fierce o'er the deep,
And mid the dread wounds of the dying and slain
The tide of destruction pour'd wide o'er the plain.

'Who is it that spurs his dark steed at the fire?
Who is it, whose wishes thus boldly aspire
To the chamber of shields, where the beautiful maid
By the spell of the mighty All-Father is laid?
It is Sigurd the valiant, the slayer of kings,
With the spoils of the Dragon, his gold and his rings.'

BRYNHILDA.

* * * * * * *

'Like a Virgin of the Shield* I rov'd o'er the sea,
My arm was victorious, my valour was free.
By prowess, by Runic enchantment and song,
I raised up the weak, and I beat down the strong;
I held the young prince mid the hurly of war,
My arm wav'd around him the charm'd scimitar;
I saved him in battle, I crown'd him in hall,
Though Odin and Fate have foredoom'd him to fall,
Hence Odin's dread curses were pour'd on my head;
He doom'd the undaunted Brynhilda to wed.
But I vowed the high vow, which Gods dare not gainsay,
That the lowest in warfare should bear me away:
And full well I knew that thou, Sigurd, alone
Of mortals the boldest in battle hast shone,
I knew that none other the furnace could stem,
(So wrought was the spell, and so fierce was the flame,)
Save Sigurd the glorious, the slayer of kings,
With the spoils of the dragon, his gold and his rings.'†

Sigurdr, stimulated by curiosity and love, now asks Brynhilda to indoctrinate him in that lore which she had gathered in various regions, or, as some commentators have it, various *worlds*, which she had visited; for all the terms used in these wild and mystical poems, are susceptible of a mythological as well as a literal interpretation. Brynhilda then describes the qualities of the enchanted cup of liquor, which she offers to Sigurdr, — strongly medicated with poetical inspiration, wit, knowledge of good and evil; and instructs him in the magical qualities of the different

* Skjald-mær, or Amazon. † The Hon. W. Spencer.

hieroglyphic characters, and especially of those which Odin had expressed from the liquor (or had discovered when inspired by the influence of the draught,) distilled from the head and horn of *Heiddraupnir* and *Hoddropnir*, two monsters, whom he had vanquished and slain. The lay then makes a rapid transition, and abruptly introduces the god, as standing on a rock, 'with naked sword and helmed brow.' Odin compels the decapitated head of *Mímir* (the Genius of prophetic inspiration in the Northern mythology), by Runic incantations and magic charms, to join in the colloquy, The ghastly head of the defunct Genius or Giant then becomes an interlocutor in this strange drama, utters oracular responses, and indicates the true magical *Runes*, and their various characteristic offices. Brynhilda then desires Sigurdr to determine whether he will pursue this course of philosophy any longer, at the hazard of learning something fatal to his future repose. But he boldly declares that he will abide the disclosure, even if impending death await him in the decrees of Fate. She then proceeds to read him a course of ethics, which, in comparative purity and good sense, is strongly contrasted with the general features of the morality inculcated by the Northern superstition. For instance:—

'And first this counsel take:—Towards thy kindred, lead a blameless life. Do not avenge, if they provoke; for this they say in heaven meets its reward.

'Another will I give:—When thou swearest, speak nought but truth. Atrocious punishments await the perjurer's crime.'

She proceeds to give him a great deal of other good

advice, and among the rest to 'beware of the evil eye,'—of enchantments,—not to take a wife for her beauty or riches,—against hard drinking and quarrelling in his cups—if attacked by an enemy in his house to go forth and meet the foe, 'for it is better to perish by the sword than to be burnt up alive,'—and not to confide in the promises of the kindred of the man whom he has slain, 'for the wolf lurks in the little child, even if they have accepted the price of blood.' These counsels are followed by directions for burying the dead, 'whether they perish by disease, or the sea, or by the sword.'—The same story is continued in several subsequent cantos, comprising very beautiful specimens of these antique Gothic compositions, and containing a copious mine of poetical wealth, from which Œlenschläger and other modern Danish and German poets have enriched their works.—They are not only full of singularly mild and beautiful poetry, and lively pictures of the manners and customs of the heroic age of the ancient North, its patriarchal simplicity, its deadly feuds, and its fanciful superstition, peopling the earth, air, and waters with deities, giants, genii, nymphs, and dwarfs; but there are many exquisite touches of the deepest pathos, to which the human heart beats in unison in every age and in every land:

'Sunt lachrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.'

Of the preceding lays, several can be traced back by the testimony of independent, authentic records to the ninth and tenth centuries. The second of Sigurdr, who had slain Völsungr the artificer, the Gudrúnar-quida,—and the song of Gunnar, were all sung to the

harp at the court of Olaf Tryggvason, king of Norway, who died in 1000.* None of these poems were known to the literati of Denmark and Sweden until the seventeenth century. The first MS. of Sæmund's Edda, which had been seen in the parent country, was sent from Iceland, in 1639, to Torfæus, the distinguished historian of Norway. The first edition of the Prose Edda was published by Resenius in a very imperfect and abridged form, at Copenhagen, in 1665, in Icelandic, Danish, and Latin. To this edition, he appended two lays of the poetic Edda, the Völuspá, or Prophecy of Vala, and Hávamál, or sublime discourse of Odin. A complete edition of the original text to the Prose Edda was published at Stockholm in 1818, with various readings, &c., by Professor Rask, whose eminent qualification for the task, by his previous residence in Iceland, and thorough knowledge of the language, are well known and fully appreciated by all acquainted with those subjects. Its text is almost entirely different from that of Resenius, by which alone this curious ancient book has hitherto been known to foreign literati, being derived from the most ancient MS. called the *Codex Regius*, from which Professor Rask never has deviated except where some reading in other ancient parchment manuscripts seemed, for critical reasons, decidedly preferable.

The Prose Edda is a sort of *Ars Poetica*, intended to initiate young Skalds in the science of mythology and the poetical art. It is generally supposed to have been arranged by the famous Snorre Sturleson who lived about a century after Sæmund Sigfusson. Certain it is

* Flateyar-bok.

that this Edda, or prosaic mythology, which may be compared to the Library of Apollodorus, being thought of little value, and perhaps rather scandalous than useful to a Christian people, was continued by other authors with a view to explain the poetical imagery and diction in the songs of the heathen Skalds, and this continuation is termed the *Skalda*. The Edda, properly so called, is for the first time distinguished in the Stockholm edition from the *Skalda* with which it was confounded by Resenius,—so that even some learned scholars have believed the Skalda a lost work, not perceiving that almost one half of it had been incorporated in Resenius's edition of the Edda Snorronis.

Snorre's Edda then consists of the following parts—1. The *Formáli*, or proem, which is an assemblage of various traditions, legends, and fables, Jewish, Christian, and classic Greek and Roman, as well as Icelandic, respecting the filiation of nations, and the origin of the ancient Scandinavian religion and race, which it deduces from the Trojans, in the same manner as the war of Troy is confounded with the national annals in the early fabulous and romantic history of other European nations. The next part of the Edda is called the *Gylfaginning*, (deceptio Gylfii); relates the journey of Gylfe, a king of *Svíthjod*, (Sweden,) a famous magician, who was exceedingly puzzled to account for the superior wisdom of the race who had recently migrated from the East to the North, and resolved to visit *As-gard* in disguise, for the purpose of satisfying his doubts at the fountain-head. For this purpose he sets off, under the travelling name of *Gangler*, and arrives at the celestial city, where he finds an oracle capable of gratifying his curiosity. He receives satisfactory answers to all his

questions in a series of fables, explaining the mythology of the poetical Edda, and forming a complete Northern Pantheon, which is illustrated by extracts from the Völuspá, the Hávamál, and other works of the Skalds.

The Second part of this Edda, called *Braga-Rædar*, represents the god of poetry *Brági* at a feast given by the sea-god Ægir, entertaining the celestial guests with an account of the various exploits of the deities.

The prose Edda concludes with the *Eptirmáli*, or Epilogue, in which several of the fables of the Edda are compared with and explained as scenes of the Trojan war.

The *Skálda* consists, first, of the *Kenningar*, which is a sort of dictionary of poetic synonymes, not unlike that contained in the *Alvis-mál* of the poetic Edda, illustrated by poetical extracts and mythological explanations of the origin of the various terms. It next contains a didactic essay upon the art of versification, and exemplifies the various kinds of metres by a curious poem of Snorre Sturleson, containing a strophe of each kind. Some more modern treatises on the adaptation of the Latin alphabet to the Icelandic language, on the figures of speech, and other grammatical and rhetorical topics, are subjoined.*

The most prominent feature of the metrical system used in Icelandic versification is its alliteration. In this respect it has been supposed to resemble the poetry of all old and comparatively rude periods of society. The poetry of the Eastern nations, the Hebrews, the Persians, &c. is full of this ornament. Indeed, it has been more or less adopted in the versification of every age

* Snorre-Edda af Rask, pp. 271—353.

and country, not even excepting the classic poets of Greece and Rome.* The Gothic nations have the alliteration in common with two of their next neigbours in the East and the West, viz., the Finns and Kymry or ancient Britons; and it is very possible that their alliterative rhymes may have been adopted from these neighbouring nations; for divesting the old Gothic verses of that ornament, they will be found to agree remarkably with the Greek and Roman hexameters.† But there is nothing in the poetry of the classic or oriental nations which can justly be compared with the Gothic alliterations. In the Eddaic poems, and in all the Scandinavian poetry, previous to the time of king Harald Hárfager, the prosody consisted of a simple metre, whose superior antiquity was attested by its name—the *Fornyrdalag*, or 'the ancient lay.' It consists, when perfectly regular, of four long syllables, or rather of two accented syllables and two shorter ones in each line. The stanzas generally consist of eight lines, and of these there are two kinds:—1st, Such as have regularly four long syllables, as in the following examples, from the Völuspá.

Hljóths bith ek allar	Give silence all
helgar kindir,	Ye sacred race,
meiri ok minui	Both great and small,
mavgo Heimthallar	Of Heimdal sprang:
vildo 'at ek Valfavthur	Val-father's deeds
vél framteljak	I will relate,
fornspjölla fira	The legends old
thau ek fremst of-nam.	Which first I learn'd.

* Conybeare's Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, Introd. Essay, p. 39.

† Rask, Angelsaxisk Sproglære (Prosody, § 9).

2dly. Of such as have only three long syllables in the first and second lines, and four in the third and fourth.

Oc til Things	The Daughter of Loki (Death)
Thridja jofri	summoned the King from this
Hvedrungs mær	world to appear at the bar of
Or heimi band.	Odin.*

The *dróttt-quædi*, or 'heroic verse,' with a prodigious variety of other metres, was invented by the Skalds, who flourished subsequently to the ninth century, all of which are minutely described in Snorre Sturleson's *Hattalykli*, or key of metres, drawn up in the beginning of the thirteenth century. These various sorts of metre are exemplified in a curious poem by Snorre, inserted in the Skalda, containing a strophe of each kind, the number amounting to one hundred and six in the whole, Thus the *Fornyrdalag*, or 'ancient lay,' has been, in a great measure, superseded by stanzas of a more modern form. But it has been recently adopted by Thorlakson, an Icelandic poet, in a translation of Milton's Paradise Lost, in which the lofty strain of our Christian epic has been not unworthily sustained in the language of the Skalds.

* Henderson's Iceland, vol. ii. p. 383.

CHAPTER V.

Icelandic Sagas.—Mythic, romantic, and historical Sagas.—Historical value of the Sagas.—Ari Frode the first Icelandic historian.—Life and character of Snorre Sturleson.—Composition of his great historical work, *Heimskringla.*

Some of the ancient Sagas which now exist in the Icelandic language, remained for a long period in oral tradition before they were reduced to writing. Others first appeared in the shape of written compositions. Generally speaking, each Saga relates the story of some distinguished king, Jarl, or chieftain, in a style of antique simplicity, in which metrical passages are interspersed to aid the memory of the reciter. These passages are for the most part selected from the pieces of verse composed by the Skalds, to celebrate the exploits of the illustrious families under whose protection and patronage they lived, and adapted to interest and touch the feelings of their countrymen by appealing to the great deeds of their heroic ancestors. The Sagas may properly be divided into mythic, romantic, and historical. In the first class, are included those which whilst they introduce mythological personages and supernatural events into the scene, retrace a faithful picture of the national manners, feelings, and prejudices. The second includes those where the authors give full scope to their imagination, and the third class, which may be considered as

authentic histories. But this division will hardly in strictness comprise any particular Saga, within either class, since they are nearly all, more or less, embellished with mythological and poetical fables. But those Sagas where the mythic character predominates are more useful for history than the purely romantic, because though the gods and men of the heroic age are here mingled together in familiar intercourse, they reflect a faithful image of ancient manners, institutions, religious feelings and prejudices. On the other hand, in the romantic Sagas there is more scope for the fictitious genius of the writer who, seeking only to amuse, gives wings to his fancy, and thus becomes comparatively indifferent to the fidelity of his descriptions and the harmony of his narrative with historical truth.

This remark is particularly applicable to that class of Sagas which refer to the adventures of the personages who figure in the historic lays of the poetic Edda. In the Sagas relating to the exploits and adventures of Siegfried, Theodoric of Bern, and Attila, tales which pervade the early literature of the South as well as the North of Europe, romantic fiction is so much blended with historic truth, and the former so much predominates over the latter, that a reliance upon these records has served to perplex and confound, rather than to illustrate the early annals of the North. Thus the authors of the rhyme and prose chronicles of Sweden, written in the fifteenth century, have enriched the history of their country with the names and exploits of kings who probably never existed anywhere, and connecting the heroes of the German Nibelungen-lied with the Gothic kings mentioned by Jornandes in his history, have pretended

to trace back a regular series of their monarchs before the Ynlings or posterity of Odin.*

But with the single exception of this particular kind of romantic Sagas, the poetical cast of these works is in general an additional guarantee of their authenticity as historical annals. They are written, as already remarked, both in prose and verse. This blending together of poetry and prose naturally occurred in the infancy of the art practised by the Saga-man or historian. Such striking incidents as seemed adapted to touch the heart, or to excite the intellect, were versified; the rest was left to oral recitation in prose. So that the more traces are found in a particular Saga of its primitive poetical form, the more ancient it is concluded to be, and consequently the more nearly approximated to the age of which he treats.† But the most ancient Sagas, those connected with the first discovery and settlement of Iceland, are strictly confined to the narrow limits of the valley in which their scene is laid, and to the particular hero or family they celebrate. Such, for example, is the *Eyrbiggia-Saga*, being the early annals of that district of Iceland lying round the promontory called Snæfell, the substance of which has been translated by Sir Walter Scott.‡ It was not the political importance of an event which induced the Skalds to make it the subject of a lay; they chose it for effect, and selected that which most interested the feelings of their auditors, and at the same time best admitted of poetical ornament.‖

* Geijer, Svea Rike's Häfder, tom. i. pp. 111—134.

† Müller, Saga-bibliothek, tom i.—*Indledning*.

‡ Weber and Jamieson's Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, p. 477.

‖ Müller, *Ib.*

These remarks are, however, exclusively applicable to the most ancient Sagas. As to the more modern, they resemble more nearly the chronicles, or as they were called in the South of Europe, *Romans* of the middle ages. But all the Sagas differ very much in their style and spirit from the monastic compositions of that period, as (with the exception of the romantic) they present a living picture of national character and manners, instead of dwelling with tiresome minuteness upon dry and barren incidents. Such, among others, is that entitled *Laxdæla-Saga*, which was published at Copenhagen in 1826, in the original Icelandic text, with a Latin version. It is the history of a particular family, who inhabited a valley in Iceland, near the river Laxá, so called from the abundance of salmon to be found in it. But it branches out into general history, goes back to the first discovery and colonization of the island, and comes down to the period when its inhabitants were converted to Christianity. It is full of striking details as to those remote times and sequestered regions,—the modes of life of their inhabitants,—their hereditary and deadly feuds, wars, factions, commerce, and fisheries,—and the exploits of the pirates or Vikingar, who were nursed on the mountain wave, and boasted that they had never slept by a cottage fire. The scene is not confined to Iceland, but spreads itself to Norway, the Orkneys, and Ferroer islands, to Ireland, and Scotland. Five kings of Ireland and one of Scotland figure as actors. The narrative is conducted in the most animated strain; the characters are portrayed with fidelity in their minutest lineaments, and we see and hear them in every act of private and public life, as if we were actually present. There is at the same time abundant

internal evidence to attest the authenticity of the narrative, and to convince us that we are not entertained by a fiction. This is also confirmed by a comparison with other authentic Sagas, in which the same characters and events are introduced, and portrayed in a manner attesting their identity and confirming the truth of their story.*

One general remark, made by a learned and ingenious writer who comes fresh from reading these works, is applicable to all of them,—that the ancient poetry and romance of the North deals more in reality and less in fictitious invention than that of the South. He explains this, by the well known fact, that the history of the middle ages in the South of Europe was written exclusively by the clergy; and the lay poets, having only the field of fiction left to them, could distinguish themselves in no other way, than by giving a higher colouring to the marvellous stories they found in the monkish chronicles. In the North, on the contrary, the Skalds, who were attached to the courts of kings and to the most distinguished families of the country, were the sole depositories of its historical traditions, which it was their interest as well as glory faithfully to preserve. Among the illustrious families who fled from Norway to Iceland to escape the yoke of Harald Hárfager were some of the descendants of the royal race of the Ynlings supposed to have sprung from Odin. They naturally felt a pride in preserving the tradition of the exploits of the ancient kings and heroes from whom they derived their descent. Among these was *Ari hinns Frode*, Ari the Wise, who was the friend and fellow student of Sæmund,

* Müller, tom. i. p. 198.

the reputed compiler of the poetic Edda, and was born in Iceland in the year 1067. There are only a few fragments of his works remaining, which have been published under the title of *Schedæ* and Landnâma-Bok; the latter of which was commenced by him and continued by other hands. His annals extend from the latter part of the ninth century to the beginning of the twelfth, and include the most remarkable events connected with the first settlement of Iceland, the revolutions in its government, the discovery of Greenland, and the introduction of Christianity. He was the first Northern writer who attempted to assign fixed dates to events by reference to a certain chronology, and his work is remarkable as being the earliest historical composition written in the old Danish or Norse tongue, which still remains the living language of Iceland. Ari was educated at a place near the famous boiling fountain of the Geysers, at the foot of the lofty Jökuls or ice-mountains. He gathered his materials principally from the traditions imparted to him by several of his cotempories, and does not appear to have made much use of either the ancient Sagas or lays. His work is, therefore, to be considered rather as a chronicle of the Christian middle ages than a child of the Northern muse. But his talents as an historian are incomparably superior to his monkish cotemporaries on the continent. He always writes with good sense and the manly freedom of a citizen and a patriot, uninfected with that grovelling spirit of superstition which then darkened the face of Europe. *

The man to whom his country's history and literature

* Müller, Saga-bibliothek, tom. i. p. 34. Snorre Sturleson, Heimskringla, tom. i. p. 3. Werlauff de Ario Multiscio, 8vo. Havn. 1808.

are most indebted, is the celebrated Snorre Sturleson, whose great historical work has justly earned for him the title of the Northern Herodotus. He was born in the year 1178, at Hvamm, on the Hvamsfjord, a small bay on the western coast of Iceland. His father, Sturla, commonly called Hvamms-Sturla, from the place of his residence, was a distinguished chieftain in that part of Iceland, and as well as his mother was connected with the most illustrious families of the island. They traced their descent from the ancient kings of Norway and Sweden, of the Ynling race, and from the Jarls of Mære, from whom sprung Rollo and the other dukes of Normandy, with the English kings of the Norman line. They could also enumerate among their ancestors the famous Ragnar Lodbrok, whose romantic story is so conspicuous in the early annals of the North.

Snorre was named after the pontiff Snorre Godi, who figures so conspicuously in the Eyrbjggia Saga, and whom both he and his father, Hvamms-Sturla, seemed to have resembled in character. At the early age of three years, he was sent to Oddè, the former residence of Sæmund Sigfusson, and placed under the guardianship and direction of Jon Loptson, grandson of Sæmund, who inherited both the wealth and the learning of his ancestor. Here young Snorre remained until his twentieth year, and received a finished education both in the Greek and Roman literature, and in that of his native country. He had here access to all the manuscripts and other collections made both by Sæmund and by Ari Frode, relating to the poetry, history, and mythology of the heathen North. He was thus placed at what might be called, in their own poetical language, the fountain of Mímir,—the source of inspiration, where

he acquired that knowledge, and cultivated those arts, by which he was afterwards to be so much distinguished. 'Here,' he might say, in the words of the Hávamál, in allusion to 'the seat of eloquence, close by the fountain of wisdom:'—

> 'I sat and was silent,
> I saw and reflected,
> I listened to that which was told.'

On the death of his tutor, with whom he remained sixteen years, Snorre left Oddè in 1197, and married the daughter of a rich priest at Borg on the Borgafiord, by which he increased his small patrimonial inheritance with a fortune of 4000 rix dollars, a very considerable sum of money for that age and country. This property was augmented by the inheritance of Borg, to which he succeeded on the death of his father, and by the acquisition of Reykhollt, and other estates, in that fertile valley. He thus became, in a short time, by far the richest individual on the island, both in lands, and flocks and herds, arms, clothes, utensils, and books. This immense wealth, with his consummate talents, address, and eloquence, gave him proportional power and influence in the community. He sometimes appeared in the Al-thing, or general national assembly, with a retinue of several hundred armed followers. He removed his residence, in 1202, from Borg to the farm of Reykhollt, situate in the Borgafiord, on the south-west coast of the island, in the midst of that wonderful volcanic region. This place he fortified, so as to render it impregnable, whilst he improved and embellished it with various useful and ornamental works. These have all perished, except the celebrated *Snorra-laug*, or Snorre-bath, which still

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remains, after the lapse of six centuries, a proud monument of his ingenuity and munificence, almost rivalling the Heimskringla itself. The hot water for this bath is supplied from a natural fountain of boiling water, situated at the distance of 500 feet to the north, in a morass undermined by subterraneous fires, and where numerous boiling springs make their appearance. It is conveyed by means of an aqueduct of hewn stones, fitted to each other in the most exact manner, and joined together by a fine cement. The bath itself is circular in form, about fifteen feet in diameter, and built of hewn stones, cemented together in the same manner with the aqueduct. The floor is paved with the same kind of tophacious stone which composes the aqueduct, and a circular stone bench, capable of holding upwards of thirty persons, surrounds the inside of the bath.

These gifts of genius and fortune raised Snorre, in the year 1213, by the free choice of the people, to the honorable station of the supreme judge or chief magistrate of the island. In this post he was distinguished for his profound knowledge of the laws and civil institutions of his native country. In the same year, he gave a proof of the prodigious variety of his talents, by writing an encomiastic lay upon Hakon Galin, a Jarl of Norway, famous in that day for his power and influence. This poem, which Snorre took care to send to the Jarl, procured, in return, besides other rich gifts, the present of a beautiful suit of armour from Hakon to the Skald, whom he invited to visit Norway. But the death of the Jarl, in the following year, prevented Snorre from accepting this invitation. There is reason, however, to believe, that the favour which this successful effort of his muse gained for him in the parent country, ensured him

when he afterwards visited Norway in 1218, the most honorable reception among the connections of Hakon, and by Skule, another Norwegian Jarl of great distinction. King Hakon IV reigned at that time in Norway, and Snorre composed a lay in praise of that monarch, and two in honor of Skule Jarl. He also travelled into West Gothland, and wrote a poetic eulogy on Christina, the widow of Hakon Jarl, who had married Askell, the supreme judge or lagman of West Gothland, from whom Snorre received, among other gifts, the antique banner which Erik Knutson, king of Sweden, had borne in battle. Snorre returned to Norway, and spent the winter at the court of Skule Jarl, where he was hospitably entertained, and received from king Hakon the title of *Dróttseti*, or court marshal, with the rank of *Leensmand*, or royal vassal, which last was conferred upon him in order to promote the designs which the Norwegians had conceived against the independence of Iceland. In 1220, Snorre returned to his native country in a ship which the Jarl had prepared, and laden with rich gifts, which Snorre did not omit to requite by another eulogium. After his return, he was involved in an extricable labyrinth of deadly feuds, some of which he had inherited from his ancestors, and others had been kindled by his own turbulence, ambition, and avarice. These were prosecuted with the most ferocious violence on all sides. The public assembly, and the national festival, were often stained with kindred blood. The republic was rent with contending factions, but that of Snorre, through the zeal and fidelity of his partizans, frequently attained the ascendancy, and enabled him to gratify his high-reaching views of ambition.

The hatred of his enemies at last rose to such a pitch

that he was compelled in 1237 to take refuge in Norway. On his arrival in that country, he found that his friend and patron Skule Jarl, had assumed the title of Duke, and aimed at the Norwegian crown. Snorre lent himself to the purposes of Skule, and retired to his court at Drontheim, where he recited one of the lays which he had composed in praise of the Duke, and in vindication of his claims to the crown. But some intelligence which he afterwards received from Iceland induced him to return to his native country. Having obtained the king's permission for that purpose, with the title of Jarl, which was conferred upon him in addition to all the other honours and favours he had received, he prepared to set sail for Iceland. As he was on the point of embarking, he received letters from the king positively forbidding his departure. Snorre disregarded the prohibition, and arrived safely in Iceland in 1239. Here he was once more involved in fierce controversies with his numerous enemies, and shortly afterwards fell a victim to their deadly hatred.

King Hakon had sent secret instructions to Gissur Thorvaldson, who was related to the king, and had formerly been Snorre's son-in-law and intimate friend, to seize on his person and bring him a prisoner to Norway, with orders, if he could not accomplish this purpose, to put him to death. The latter alternative was preferred by Thorvaldson, who had become the mortal foe of Snorre, and who was tempted by his great wealth and the revenge he nourished against him, to become his assassin. It is remarkable, that although Snorre was admonished of his danger by a letter from one of his friends, written in Runic characters, yet neither he who was so deeply versed in this lore, nor any of the persons

about him, could decipher the letter. Thorvaldson collected a band of armed men from one of the clans which was hostile to Snorre, and taking him by surprise, basely murdered him at Reikhollt, in the night of the 22nd September 1241.

Thus perished, at the age of sixty-three years, Snorre Sturleson, illustrious by his birth, his talents, and attainments, but according to the concurrent testimony of his cotemporaries, stained with unprincipled ambition, avarice, faithlessness, and every other vice that dishonours and degrades human nature. It must, however, be remembered, that those who have portrayed the character of this remarkable man in such dark and sombre colours, were his enemies, and some of them his relations, whose warm attachment had been turned to deadly hate by family dissensions. The partial judgments pronounced by party spirit are seldom ratified by posterity. Whatever reproaches the recklessness of Snorre's ambition may have incurred, it is difficult to believe that the man, who was four times raised to the chief magistracy of his country by the free choice of his fellow citizens, did not possess qualities to command, in a considerable degree, the general confidence, whilst, at the same time, they secured him the warm attachment of his friends and partizans. But the very qualities adapted to win this confidence and this attachment in a rude period of society, are not of that amiable and lofty cast which add lustre to human nature under more auspicious circumstances. Neither the Icelandic commonwealth, nor any other species of government which prevailed in Europe during the middle ages, yielded that tolerable degree of security for life and property, which is now afforded under almost every form of rule prevailing among civilized and Christian

nations. In the absence of a regular administration of justice enforced by adequate sanctions, cunning and violence must necessarily supply the place of wisdom and virtue in the conduct of public affairs. In such a state of things, private revenge will supersede the public arm, and the feuds thus engendered will be transmitted from generation to generation, and perpetuated by family rivalship. It must, however, be confessed, that after making all these deductions, the cultivation of letters does not here seem to have had that effect in tempering the sordid and violent passions of human nature which is commonly attributed to their humanizing influence. Snorre pursued all those objects which are commonly supposed to minister to human happiness,—riches, power, honours, and pleasure,—with a selfish disregard to the means by which they were to be attained, and with no generous and enlarged desire to contribute to the general welfare of society.

But whatever might be the moral defects of his character, the thirst of knowledge and desire of fame was never extinct in the breast of Snorre. He aspired to the laurel crown as well as that bestowed by the historic muse, and finding the language of his country completely formed, independent of classic models, he gratified his taste and genius by cultivating his own native national literature. Had his mind been directed to those scholastic studies which then engrossed the exclusive attention of lettered Europe, he might perhaps have produced a work rivalling that of Saxo Grammaticus in rhetorical embellishments, but which, written in the dead language of Rome, would have failed to express the living thoughts and feelings to which his native tongue alone could give utterance. Although the mind of

Snorre was imbued in early youth with a deep knowledge of the annals and literature of the North, it is difficult to conceive how, in the midst of his active and stormy life, he could have found time and opportunity for their successful cultivation. But it is the faculty of genius to create the leisure necessary to accomplish its designs, even in the midst of the most distracting cares and occupations. Snorre is generally supposed to have had some share in collecting and arranging the songs of the elder Edda, and he certainly contributed mainly to the compilation of the prose Edda in the form in which it now exists. There is some diversity of opinions as to the manner in which he proceeded in the composition of his great historical work, *Heimskringla*, or the annals of the kings of Norway, and as to the degree of merit which may justly be attributed to him in respect to originality of style and thought. The learned professor Müller, in his essay upon the sources from which Snorre derived his materials, expresses the opinion that this work is a mere compilation from the ancient Sagas, which Snorre arranged, corrected, and sometimes enlarged from other sources, causing the whole to be carefully transcribed in its present form. Snorre seems to give some countenance to this opinion by the modest and unpretending manner in which he speaks in the commencement of the Preface to Heimskringla. "In this book," says he, "I have caused to be recorded, from the traditions of the wise men, the history of ancient events, and of the great deeds of the kings and heroes who have reigned over the countries of the North, where the Danish language *(danska túngu,)* is spoken. I have also inserted their genealogies, so far as they were known to me, and that partly from the most

ancient collection of this sort, called *Langfedgatal*, where the kings and other illustrious persons have caused to be transcribed their lineages. Part of the things herein contained are taken from the old songs or historical lays which constituted the delight of our ancestors." He then goes on to vindicate his course in this respect by the example of his predecessors, and refers to the songs and Sagas from which he had selected his materials. Among others was Thiodolf, who was Skald to Harald Hárfager, and composed a song upon king Rögnvald, called the *Ynglinga-tal*, in which his ancestors were traced back to a remote period, with a summary account of their lives, deaths, and burial places. Fiolner was the son of *Yngvifreys*, long adored by the Sviar with sacrifices, from whom the Yngling race derive their origin and name. The lineage of Hakon Jarl is traced in an ancient lay, composed by Eyvind one of his Skalds, and called *Háleygjatal*. Therein is mentioned Sœmingr, Yngvifrey's son, with an account of their deaths and burial places. From Thiodolf's tradition, the *Ynglinga-Saga* was first written, and afterwards enlarged by other learned men. The former age was called *Bruna-öld*, from the prevailing custom of burning the bodies of the dead, and raising to their memory grave stones, called *Bauta-Steinar*. But after Freyr was buried at Upsala, many princes raised not only grave-stones but tumuli to their predecessors. After which time also Dan Mikilláti, king of the Danes, built for himself a tumulus, in which he commanded his body to be interred with all the ensigns of his regal dignity, his armour, horse, and other wealth. His example was followed by many of his successors, and this was called in Denmark *Haugs-öld*, 'the age of the tumuli:' but the Norwegians and the

Swedes adhered for a long time to the more ancient custom of burning the dead. Iceland began to be settled when Harald Hárfager was king in Norway. Both he and his successors entertained at their court Skalds by whom their deeds were sung. And we have followed in our narrative those lays sung before the princes who were themselves the actors of these deeds, or their children, not doubting the truth of what they tell respecting the different expeditions of these princes and their warlike achievements. For though the lays of the Skalds sounded the praises of the heroes before whom they were sung, they would hardly have presumed to attribute to them or their ancestors the fame of actions which all present must have known to be false, and which would have reflected shame upon those they were meant to honour."—Snorre then proceeds to mention with encomium, his predecessor Ari Frode, who was the first that recorded in the language of the North its history, both ancient and more recent, leaving us to infer that he had used the works of Ari, which have nearly all since perished, in the composition of the Heimskringla.

CHAPTER VI.

Legend of Odin, from the Ynlinga-saga.—Its historical interpretation.—Finns.—Goths.—Sviar.—Mythology and religious rites of the ancient North.—Religious system preceding that of Odin. Ynglings in Sweden, and Skjoldungs in Denmark.—State of society and manners.—Rigs-mál.—Anglo-Saxon poem of Bjowulf.

THE leading event in the early history of the ancient North, is the migration of Odin and his followers from the banks of the Tanais, which is supposed to have taken place in the first century before the Christian æra. According to a modern hypothesis, which has but a slight foundation in the national traditions, this adventurer had been preceded by two others of the same name, who migrated from the East to the North, the first at a period of antiquity shrouded in impenetrable
500 B.C. darkness; the second is supposed to have fled, with a colony of Goths, before the conquering arms of Darius Hystaspis, to the southern shores of the Baltic, whence they crossed to Sweden, and, subduing or expelling the aboriginal inhabitants, became the primitive stock from which descended the Northmen race, with its various branches.* The following is the legend of the historical Odin, as it is told in the Ynglinga-saga:—

"The orb of the world," says Snorre, "in which

* Græters Suhm. tom. i. pp. 23—31. Suhm om Odin, &c. cap. ii. p. 69. Schœning om de Norskes, &c. Oprindelse, cap. iii. p. 76, et seq.

dwell the race of mankind, is, as we are informed, intersected with bays and gulfs: great seas from the ocean penetrate the firm land. It is well known that from the straits of Gibraltar (Njörvasund,) a great sea extends quite to Palestine, (Jórsala-land). From this sea, there lies towards the north-east, a gulf called the Black Sea, which separates the three parts of the world from each other: the land to the east is called Europe, by others Enea. Northerly from the Black Sea lies the greater or cold *Svithjód*, (Svecia or Scythia magna.) Some affirm that great Svithjód is not of less extent than Serkland, (North-Africa): others even compare it with the great Blá-land, (Æthiopia magna). The northern part of Svithjód is uncultivated on account of the frost and cold, in the same manner as the southern part of Bláland lies waste, on account of the burning heat. In great Svithjód are many provinces peopled with various tribes of different tongues. There are giants and dwarfs; there are black men, and dragons and other wild beasts of prodigious size. Towards the north, in the mountains beyond the habitable country, rises a river properly called the Tanais, but which has obtained the name of the Tanasquisl, or Vanasquil, and which, running through Svithjód, falls into the Black Sea. The country encircled by the branches of this river was in those days called Vanaland or Vanaheimr. This stream separates the *three* parts of the world from each other, the part lying east being called Asia, and that to the west Europe.

"The country to the east of Tanasquisl in Asia was called Asaland or Asaheimr, and the capital of that country, As-gard. There ruled Odin, and there too was a great place of sacrifice. Twelve pontiffs (hof-

'godar) presided in the temples, who were at the same time the judges of the law. They were called Díar or Drottnar, and all the people were bound to shew them reverence and obedience. Odin was a puissant chief, and conquered many kingdoms. He was successful in every combat: whence his warriors believed that victory hung on his arm. When he sent forth his people to war, or any other expedition, he laid his hands upon them, and blessed them; they then believed themselves invincible. In whatever perils they found themselves, they invoked his name, and found safety.

"Now it happened that Odin set out on an expedition against the Vanir, but they made such an obstinate resistance to his arms, that the fortune of war remained doubtful, until the Vanir at last submitted to terms of peace, and gave as hostages their chief Njord the Rich and his son Freyr. The Æsir, on the contrary, sent a man named Hænir, who was of gigantic stature, very handsome, and very fit for a chieftain. They sent with him as a companion Mímir, a very wise man; in exchange for whom, the Vanir gave their wisest man, who was called Kvásir or Qvásir. So soon as Hænir came to Vanaheimr, they made him their chief, and Mímir was the oracle whom he consulted on all occasions of difficulty which came before the national council. Hence the Vanir conceived a suspicion that the Æsir had deceived them in the exchange. They took Mímir, cut off his head, and sent it to the Æsir. Odin took the head, embalmed it with aromatic herbs, and sang over it a magic lay, so that it spoke to him, and revealed many secret things. Odin made Njord and Freyr pontiffs, and they became Díar among the Æsir. Njord's daughter was called Freya; she was a priestess, and presided

over the sacrifices; she also taught the Æsir the arts of magic, in which the Vanir were very expert. When Njord lived with the Vanir, he took his own sister to wife, for this was allowed by their law. Their children were Freya and Freyr; but marriage between such near relations was prohibited among the Æsir.

"Now there is a ridge of mountains running from the north-east to the south-west, which divides Great Svithiód from other kingdoms; to the south of this range of mountains lies Tyrkland (Turkestan), where Odin had great possessions. At this time, the Romans spread themselves over the world and subdued the nations. Many chiefs and princes fled before their conquering arms. Now Odin was a Seer and Magician, and knew that there was a place of refuge reserved for him and his people in the north. So he set his brothers Ve and Vile over As-gard, and accompanied by the pontiffs and a throng of followers, took his course westward through Gardariki (Russia), and thence southward to Saxland. He had many sons, some of whom he established in Saxland. Thence he proceeded northwards across the sea, and chose Odins-ey (the island of Fionia) for his residence, and sent a certain Gefion across the Sound to discover new countries. She came to king Gylfe (in Sweden), who gave her a plough of land.* Thence she went to Jötunheim,† and took four of the sons of the Jötnar, whom she transformed into oxen (i. e. reindeer), and ploughed out of the main land, next over against Odins-ey, the allotted portion of ground. The land

* Plógsland. Jugum terræ.

† The Cwenland, described in the first chapter, the present province of *Norrland*, in Sweden, then inhabited by a Finnish tribe.

thus severed from the main land was called Selund. Here she fixed her abode, and married Skjöldr, one of the sons of Odin, and they dwelt in Hledra. Where this land once stood is now a lake or sea called Lögur, in Sweden (now the *Mælar*). Hence the bays and gulphs in this sea have the same shape with the capes and promontories of Zealand. Thus sings Bragi the Old:—

'Blythe Gefyon drew away
from the rich Gylfe,
(so that the running creatures smoked,)
the increase of Denmark:
Four heads the wondrous oxen bore,
and eight eyes, as along they went—
dragging the huge fragment of earth
the peaceful isle to form.'*

Now when Odin heard that there was a fruitful country eastward of the land of Gylfe, he went to him, and made with him a covenant, the king seeing that he was not powerful enough to withstand the Æsir. Odin and Gylfe tried many tricks of magic against each other, but the Æsir were always victorious in these contests. Odin fixed his abode near the lake Lögur, (the Mäler sea in Sweden), at old Sigtun, where he built a great temple, and offered sacrifices, according to the custom of the Æsir. He took possession of the surrounding country, which he named Sigtun. He assigned places where the pontiffs might reside. Njord dwelt in Nóatun; Freyr in Upsal; Heimdallr in Himinbjörg; Thór in Thrúdváng; Balder in Breidablik: to all these he gave pleasant seats.

* This mythos has been beautifully paraphrased by Œlenschlæger in his *Nordens Guder*.

"When Odin and his followers came to the North, he taught the people those arts and mysteries which have ever since been cultivated there. I will tell how it came to pass that he had such power and influence over other men. Now the case was this: his person was comely and his countenance mild and benignant to his friends, but to his enemies dreadful to behold; such was his wonderful power of changing at will his form and face. He knew also how to sing lays, and his pontiffs were called masters of the lay, because they first introduced this art into the North. He could look into futurity; could strike his enemies with blindness or deafness, or sudden panic, and dull the edge of their weapons, whilst he rendered his own warriors invincible with magic spells. He could transform himself at pleasure into any bird, beast, fish, or serpent, and fly in an instant to the uttermost parts of the earth, whilst his body remained all the time in a trance. He could with a single word extinguish fire, still the raging sea, direct the course of the winds, and raise the dead. He had a wonderful ship called Skidbladnir, in which he could sail over the great ocean, yet so small that he could wrap it up as a piece of cloth. He understood the arts of divination, and carried about with him the embalmed head of Mímir, from whose responses he obtained a knowledge of what was passing in the remotest lands. He had also two ravens who could speak, and flew on his behests to the uttermost parts of the earth. All these arts he imparted to others by means of Runes, and lays, and magic songs, which he taught to the priests and priestesses. Odin and his twelve pontiffs were at last deified and worshipped with divine honours.

"Odin established in his new dominions the same

laws and customs which prevailed among the Æsir. He commanded the dead to be burned, and their wealth to be consumed on the same funeral pile, so that they might take with them to Valhall all that they had enjoyed on earth. The ashes he ordered to be buried in the ground, or thrown into the sea, and tumuli to be erected in memory of those whose lives and actions rendered them worthy of that honour, with stone monuments (Bautasteinar,) to the most distinguished. He established solemn festivals, at which sacrifices were offered, first at the beginning of winter, for a prosperous year; secondly, in the middle of winter, for a fruitful season; and lastly, in the summer, for victory over their enemies. Throughout Svíthjód (Sweden) all the people paid tribute to Odin, that he might guard the land against its foes and offer the accustomed sacrifices. This Svíthjód (that in the North) was called Mannheim, but the greater Svíthjód, (in the East) was called Godheim.*

"Now it came to pass that Odin died in Svíthjód, and in his last sickness ordered his body to be wounded with a spear, in order to appropriate to himself all those that are killed in battle, declaring that he was going to Godheim, there to prepare a seat of joy for his friends. The Sviar persuade themselves that he actually returned to As-gard, there to enjoy eternal life. From this time, men began still more to have faith in Odin, and to offer him vows. He oft appeared to the Sviar, as they thought, especially before great battles. To some he promised victory, others he invited to his hall: both esteemed their lot equally happy. After his death, Odin was placed on a funeral pile, and burnt with great pomp.

* Ynglinga-Saga, cap. i.—viii.

In those days men believed that the higher the flame of the funeral pile ascended, so much higher would be the seat of the deceased in heaven, and the more wealth was burnt with his body so much richer would he be in heaven." *

It is evident that a great deal of this account consists of mythic and poetic fictions of the ancient North, and the whole of it is probably an attempt to accommodate these to the traditions extant at the time it was written, respecting the migration of the historic Odin from the East, and the establishment by him of those political and religious institutions which prevailed in Scandinavia until the introduction of Christianity.† Thus the Æsir are the gods of the new religion introduced by Odin, and at the same time his temporal companions and followers, the tribe of the Ases, or Aso-Goths from the river Tanais. As-gard or Godheim is their celestial abode from which they descended on earth, (Manheim or Sweden) to mingle with the children of men, and at the same time the original seat of Odin and his people on the Tanais; Odin is the supreme deity, the father of gods and men, who imparts to them a knowledge of all things human and divine, who became incarnate in the person of his prophet of the same name, by whom the rude inhabitants of the North were initiated in his religion; the Vanir are the Russians; the Jötnar are the Demons, the enemies of the beneficent deities and of men, and also the aborigines of Scandinavia, who were expelled by the new settlers, and, adhering to their ancient religion, became the implacable enemies of the

* Ynglinga-Saga, cap. x.

† P. E. Müller, Critiske Undersögelse af Danmarks og Norges Sagn-Historie, &c. p. 249.

new faith. The miraculous legend of the manner in which Zealand was severed from the main land, or transferred from Upland, may allude to some old tradition respecting the formation of this beautiful island by natural causes; or to a cession made by Gylfe in order to prevent a war with the Ases: and Odin's wonderful ship *Skídbladnir*, is that described in the prose Edda, where Gangler interrogates one of the Genii respecting the Ship of the Gods, of which he had before told him, and receives the following answer: "Skídbladnir is the best ship and the most curiously constructed, but *Naglfar* is the greatest of all the ships of the gods. The former was built by certain dwarfs, who made a present of it to Freyr. It is so vast that there is room to hold all the deities with their armour. As soon as the sails are spread, it directs its course with a favourable breeze wherever they desire to navigate; and when they wish to land, such is its marvellous construction, that it can be taken to pieces, rolled up, and put in the pocket. 'That is an excellent ship indeed,' replied Gangler, and must have required much science and magic art to construct."*

All these are poetical embellishments of the historical traditions, respecting the migration of Odin and his followers from the East, and their establishment in the Scandinavian peninsula. But these traditions were derived from other sources and had an independent existence: they had constantly prevailed in the ancient North, and

* Professor Rask, in his commentary on Ohter and Wulfstan's voyages, supposes it to have been one of the light ships or batteaux of the Cwenas carried over-land by them in their wars with the Northmen, it being a construction of the dwarfs (Cwenas) not of the deities (Æsir).

are confirmed by the allusions of the Norman and Lombard writers of the South of Europe in the middle ages, to the same traditions, which they frequently confound with the legend deducing the origin of the Northmen from the Trojans;* and what is of still more weight, by the internal evidence of the old Scandinavian mythology and language clearly revealing their oriental origin. The followers of the historic Odin were the Sviar, known to Tacitus under the name of Suiones, and the inhabitants whom they found in possession of the country were another tribe of Goths, who had migrated thither at a remote period veiled from the eye of history. The primitive people by whom it was occupied were the Jötnar and dwarfs, the Fenni of Tacitus, the Skrithfinni of Procopius, and the Cwenas and Finnas mentioned by the Norwegian navigator Ohter to king Alfred. They were gradually expelled and driven further north towards the arctic circle by the Goths and Sviar, with whom they maintained perpetual war embittered by religious rancour, often represented in the fictions of the mythic age, under the allegory of a contest between the celestial deities and the giants or evil genii.†

Odin founded the empire of the Sviar, which was originally confined to a small territory around the Mœlar Sea in the present Swedish province of Upland, called the lesser Svíthjód, in contrast to the greater Svíthjód,

* Thus in the *Roman de Rou*, the origin of the Danes is traced to a migration of Trojans who escaped the Grecian sword, and under the conduct of *Danaus*, (whence the name) settled in the country afterwards called Danmarc.

† Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 380—430. Græters Suhm, tom. i. pp. 23—64. Munter, Kirchengeschichte von Dænnemark and Norwegen, tom. i. pp. 12, 68—81.

or Scythia, whence they migrated, and Mannaheim, or the Home of Man, in contrast to the celestial abode of As-gard. By degrees the Sviar, as the leading tribe governed by the pontiff kings, the immediate descendants of Odin, and having the custody of the great temple at Sigtun, the principal seat of the new superstition, acquired an ascendancy over the Goths who possessed the more Southern tract of country called Gautland, Götland, or Göta-rike. This precedence of the Sviar over the Goths is established by the express terms of the ancient fundamental law of their joint empire, according to which the 'king was elected by the national assembly of all the Swedes, *(a Ting allra Svia,)* at the Mora-Stone, in the plain near Upsal, and the assembly of all the Goths, *(Ting allra Göta,)* shall re-elect, or confirm him.'* This distinction between the two tribes is constantly preserved in the traditions and annals of the middle ages, and the division between the Svia and Göta-rike is strongly marked by a chain of mountains running between Södermanland and East Gothland. It is also recognized to this day in the constitution of the supreme judicial tribunals called the Svea and Götha Hofrät, established during the reign of Gustavus Adolphus, and to which a third has been recently added for the provinces of Scania and Bleking.

One of the ancient documents which throws the most light upon the history of the heroic age in the North, is the most recently published of the Eddaic poems, called *Rigs-mál.* The prince of that name is said to have been the son of Skjold, and, according to the chronology of Suhm, reigned in Scania about the end of the

† Ihre, Dissert. de Initiatione Regum Suio-Gothorum, Ed. Upsala, 1752.—Geijr, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 432.

second century of the Christian æra.* This poem contains a minute classification of the different orders of society, personified as the children of king Rig, who is supposed to have divided them into distinct casts, assigning to each its respective rank in the social scale. As a literary composition it resembles the Anglo-Saxon poem of Bjówulf, and all other genuine traditionary poems or romances of uncivilized nations, in its unpretending and Homeric simplicity of style and incidents. In this respect it has been justly called one of the most curious and interesting 'manners-painting strains' that have been preserved and handed down to posterity.† The effects of the original Gothic migration and conquest in Scandinavia are here distinctly marked in the features of the slave caste, descended from the aboriginal Finns, and distinguished from their conquerors by black hair and complexion, as well as the squalid poverty and misery in which they were condemned to live. The caste of freemen and freeholders, lords of the soil which they cultivated, and descended from the Gothic conquerors, with their reddish hair, fair complexion, and all the traits which peculiarly mark that famous race,—is in like manner personified in a vivid description of a single family. Then comes the cast of the illustrious Jarls and the Herser, earls and barons,—who are distinguished from the others by their still fairer hair and skin, by their noble employments and manners, from whom descend the kingly race, skilled in Runic science, in manly exercises, and the military art.

We have here the early history of the Scandinavians

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. i. p. 81. Critiske Historie, tom. vii. p. 474.

† Jamcison's Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, p. 444.

traced in a few lines—but these are strongly marked, and confirmed by all the traditions of the ancient North, respecting the different races of men by which the country was successively occupied.* The first Gothic emigrants subdued the Celto-Finnish tribes, who were the primitive inhabitants of the country, and reduced them to servitude, or drove them first to the mountains and then to the desert wilds and fastnesses of Norrland, Lapland, and Finland. Here the Jötnar, as they were called by their Gothic invaders, continued to adhere to the groveiling superstition of their fathers, which was that form of polytheism which has been called Fetichism, or the adoration of beasts and birds, of stocks and stones, all the animate and inanimate works of creation. The antipathy between these two races, so continually alluded to in the songs and sagas of the mythic and heroic age, is significantly expressed in the legend of Njördr, who dwelt by the sea-side, and Skade, a mountain nymph of the rival race of the Jötnar, whom he had espoused. She very naturally prefers her native abode on the Alpine heights, whilst he insists on dwelling where he can hear the roar of the ocean billows. At last, they compromise this matrimonial dissention by agreeing to pass nine nights alternately among the mountains and three on the sea-shore. But Njördr soon tires of this compact, and vents his dissatisfaction in a lay to this effect: "How do I hate the mountain wilds! I have only passed nine nights there; but how long and tedious did they seem! There one hears nothing but the howling of wolves, instead of the sweet notes of the swan." To which Skade extemporises this response; "How

* F. Magnussen, Edda Sæmundi, tom. iii. Rigs-Mál, Intro. pp. 147—169. Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 486—495.

can I rest on the sandy sea-shore, where my slumbers are every morning broken by the hideous screaming of the sea-gulls?" The result is, that she deserts her husband and returns to the mountains where her father dwells; there snatching up her bow and fastening on her snow-skates, she bounds over the hills in pursuit of the wild beasts.*

The Sviar, who migrated with the historic Odin, achieved no forcible conquest over their national brethren of the Gothic tribe by whom they had been preceded. The ascendency of Odin and his followers over their predecessors was acquired and maintained by superstition, and their supposed superiority in magic and the other arts which win the confidence or influence the fears of a barbarous nation. The older worship of the primitive inhabitants, and of their conquerors, was modified by this new prophet, who taking advantage of the pre-existing belief in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and the incarnation of divine spirits, so widely diffused among the ancient people of the earth, pretended to be the former Odin, who had again descended among his faithful Goths. His worship thus soon supplanted that of the more ancient Odin, and the attributes and actions of both were gradually confounded together in the apprehension of the Scandinavians. But it did not supplant that of Thor, whom the primitive people of the North regarded as the elder and most beneficent of the deities. In him they worshipped the goodly elements of nature, the light, the heat, and espe-

* See the prose-Edda published by Prof. Rask, Stockholm, 1818, ch. xxiii. But Snorre, in his *Ynglingasaga*, ch. ix, says that she married Odin afterwards, and that they had many children together.

cially the thunder, shaking and purifying the atmosphere. This deity was principally revered in Norway, and, after its discovery and settlement, in Iceland: but he maintained his recognized equality with the other superior gods even in the great temple of Upsal, the principal seat of the Northern superstition. His votaries formed a distinct sect, who were often engaged in deadly strife with the peculiar worshippers of Odin. The next deity in the Scandinavian hierarchy was Freyer, who represented the prolific powers of nature, and with his sister Freya, the Venus of this mythology, was principally revered in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland: whilst Odin and his son, Balder, were adored both at Upsal and Ledra as the peculiar national deities of the Gothic Danes and Sviar. The religion of the North, as it was at last modified by this new dispensation, in the conjoint adoration of Thor, Odin, and Freyer, bore a strong family likeness to the three principles of Schamanism, or the faith professed by the votaries of the Dalaï Lama in central Asia. This correspondence points most significantly to its origin, and the filiation of religious creeds and forms of worship thus combines with that of language to trace the present people of the North to the remotest regions of the East.*

The primitive rites of worship among these nations were celebrated in the open air—on the lofty mountains, amidst the solemn majesty of the boundless forests or in the secluded islands, which rose among the dark waters of the silent lakes. This simple worship in 'temples not made with hands' was ultimately exchanged for religious rites, celebrated in structures of wood and

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. pp. 68—95.

stone, and marked by something like Asiatic pomp and splendour. Sacrifices were offered and festivals instituted at stated periods, when the people, ceasing from strife and labour, united to celebrate the expected return of the Spring, and renovation of the powers of nature at the winter solstice; or at another time the death of Balder and its attendant mysteries, figuring not only the changes of the seasons but the successive epochs in the moral history of man and other created beings. Unhappily these festivals and sacrifices were not always innocent in their character. Here, as elsewhere, man offered up his brother man, to propitiate the wrath of their common parent and creator. Hostile tribes sacrificed their prisoners taken in war, as a pledge of future victory; parents their children, to secure to themselves health and long life; and subjects their kings, to avert the evils of famine, or pestilence, or disastrous war.* This dark and bloody superstition had its priests and priestesses, its oracles and mysteries, its auguries and predictions by the flight of birds, the sound of thunder, and the inspection of the entrails of slaughtered victims. It extended its influence over all the actions of human life. The infant child, if permitted by its parents to live, was sprinkled with water, and secured by magic charms against future peril. The young chieftain of generous birth was early initiated in the sacred science of Runic writing, and in the knowledge of the ancient lay, as well as the more kingly accomplishments of the chace, and other exercises connected with the use of arms. Every king was pontiff of his people, and every Jarl the priest of his tribe. One of the most sacred and

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. pp. 134—144. Müller, Saga-bibliothek, tom. iii. p. 93.

important duties of these chieftains was to offer the accustomed sacrifices in the great temples of their respective districts, for fruitful seasons, for the continuance of peace, or in time of war, for victory over their enemies. Religion was thus connected with all the public transactions of the nation.*

Pursuing the thread of these legendary traditions, which must form our only clue in this period of darkness and fable, we find that Odin made Heimdallr, one of his followers, ruler in Scania, the original seat of the primitive Danes. From one of Odin's sons sprung the Ynlings, who reigned so long in Sweden and Norway. Another of his sons, Skjold, led a colony of Goths into Zealand, where he established, at Ledra, the seat of a separate kingdom. From him descended the Skjoldungs, the race of kings who so long swayed the sceptre of Denmark. Lastly, Odin established his son Balder as vice-king over the Angles, in the southern part of the Cimbric Chersonesus. Hence the Anglo-Saxon monarchs all traced their origin to Odin or Wodan.†

Nor, a chief descended from the ancient Finnish family of the Fornjoter, established himself at Drontheim, from which he subdued the surrounding country, which is said to have taken from him the name of Norway. But the old record containing this legend, called *Fundinn Noregr* (Norway discovered), is plainly entitled to no faith whatever as an historical document. It is a

* Snorre, Saga Hakonar Gode, cap. xvi.

† Suhms Geschichte, &c. von Werlauff, p. 4. Græters Suhm, p. 75. Chron. Sax. Ed. Gibson, Oxon, 1692, p. 13. Beda Ven. lib. i. cap. 15.

mere allegory, intended to give lustre to the origin of the ancient kings of Norway. *Nor* is a mythic, not a historic personage, and the name of Norway has been given to *him*, not his to the country of which it is a personification.* There is no reason to believe that any considerable portion of Norway was ever united under a single monarch previous to the time of Harald Hárfager, who first combined the various tribes of which it originally consisted into one nation, by subduing and reducing to vassallage their petty kings.

Dan Mykillati, king of Scania, a descendant of Heimdallr, married Olufa, the daughter of Olaf, king of Zealand, the sixth in descent from Skjold. He first united the petty states of Scania, Zealand, and the lesser isles, and may thus be said to have founded the Danish monarchy, though it was subsequently again broken into smaller kingdoms. He is also said to have given the whole country the national appellation of Denmark, which is probably the true origin of the name. But others have deduced it from the fact, that the countries of the North were anciently divided, according to their natural situation, into insular and mainland: the former being called *Reid-gotaland*, and the latter *Ey-gotaland;* and the tribe of Goths established in Scania, were called Danskir or Danir, from their inhabiting the flat land situate between the mountains and the sea.† 300–400.

After relating the legend of Odin, as we have inserted it above, the Ynlinga-Saga proceeds to deduce the

* Geijer, tom. i. pp. 460—472.

† Græters Suhm, tom. i. p. 70. Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 125. Snorra-Edda, Ed. Rask, pp. 146, 195.

history of the dynasty of that name in Sweden, during the first seven centuries of the Christian æra. The first monarchs of this line were gods or demigods. To them succeeded mortal kings, whose history is shrouded in the same obscurity with that of their deified predecessors. This race of pontiff princes became extinct in the person of Ingald Illråde, sometime in the first part of the eighth century. That monarch gave his daughter Asa in marriage to Gudröd, the Gothic king of Scania; she persuaded him to murder his brother Halfdan III; plotted the death of her husband Gudröd, and fled to her father in Sweden. Halfdan left a son, Ivar Vidfadme, who, after the death of his uncle Gudröd, invaded Sweden with a powerful host, and subdued the country. On the approach of his foe, Ingald Illråde was entertaining his courtiers at a great feast, and, finding that he was unable to resist, or to make his escape, took the desperate resolution of setting fire to his hall, and thus perished in the flames with his daughter and all his nobles.*

The Saga then goes on to relate how "Ivar Vídfadme conquered all Sweden (allt Svíaveldi), and united it with all Denmark (allt Danaveldi), and a great part of Saxland, the whole of Estland, and a fifth part of England. From him henceforth descend the supreme kings of the Danes and the Swedes."†

The part of England thus subdued by Ivar Vídfadme, is more explicitly marked in the Hervarar Saga as Northumbria, which is said to have descended to Ivar's grandson, Harald Hyltedand. The Anglo-Saxon annals

* Ynlinga-Saga, cap. xliii. xliv. Geijer, tom. ii. pp. 452—519.

† Ynglinga-Saga, cap. xlv

make no mention of these earlier conquests of the Northmen. But as they are generally silent respecting the transactions of the north of England at this period, no inference is to be drawn against the credibility of the Icelandic accounts from this circumstance.

The petty states of Scania and Zealand had continued united, with some temporary exceptions, under one sceptre, from the time of Dan Mykillati to that of Ivar Vidfadme. But Jutland did not, at this time, form a part of the monarchy; and we should form very erroneous notions of the condition of society in that age, were we to annex to it the modern ideas of strength, compactness, and unity. Not only was the power of the monarchs extremely limited, like that of the kings of ancient Greece in the heroic age, or of the Germanic chiefs, as described by Tacitus, depending more upon those personal qualities which attract the imagination and win the favour of a barbarous people, than upon any fixed and definite rule of policy: but there were a number of inferior chieftains scattered over the territory, who claimed the title and some of the prerogatives of kings. There were petty kings, (Sma-konongar or Fylke-konongar,) and Sea-kings, and Island-kings, and Cape-kings, — which last were pirates lurking under the promontories, and sallying forth to prey upon the unsuspecting mariner.* The later kings, who reigned

* The word *King* (Anglo-Sax. *Cyning*, Isl. *Konúngr*) is derived from the Icelandic *Konr* (a young man, a man, a hero), through the derivative termination or affix *úngr*, as in *Skjöldúngr* from *Skjöldr*, &c. the corresponding affix in Anglo-Saxon being *ing*, as in *Wódening*, *Sceafing*, &c. Professor F. Magnussen, in the vocabulary to the 2d vol. of Edda Sæmundi, has referred to many corresponding expressions of foreign languages illustrative of this etymology, as in

in Ledra were frequently engaged in war with the Ynlings of Sweden and with the petty kings of Jutland; and that curious literary monument, the Anglo-Saxon poem of Bjowulf has been supposed to relate to the incidents of these wars. But this supposition is probably founded upon a mistake by which the Jutes, who were, in fact, a Gothic tribe, have been confounded with the Jötnar or primitive inhabitants of Scandinavia, and it has been hence erroneously inferred that they were regarded with implacable animosity by the later Gothic settlers in the Danish isles, as "a wicked and gigantic race, of the progeny of Cain, who were exiled in consequence of the sin of their ancestors." But so far from any such permanent hostility having existed in those early times between the insular Gothland and continental Gothland, (of which last Jutland made a part,) the old Danish chronicles relate that the Jutes implored assistance from one of the earliest kings of Ledra (Dan) against the Teutonic tribes, and his expedition being successful, he was unanimously elected king of Jutland at *Danelyng* near Viburg. The poem of Bjowulf is probably a translation or rifaccimento of some older lay, originally written in the ancient language of Denmark. It has perhaps some remote foundation in history, the facts of which have been indistinguishably blended with mythic and poetic fictions of the most

Welsh *cûn*, one that attracts or draws to himself, a leader or chief, from which are formed *cuniad*, *cuniedyz*, with derivative affixes like those above mentioned. So in Tatár, *khán*, princeps, with the aspirate *kh*, like the Allem. *chuning*. The other Tatár word *Khágán*, emperor, may very aptly be compared to the old kingly name among the Scandinavians, *Háhon*, or Há-*konr*, the high-born youth, *i. e.* prince, highness.

wild and romantic character. This heroic poem is full of vivid pictures of life and manners. As a record of ancient opinions, customs and institutions, it is even more instructive than the most full and detailed history of particular events, which we should vainly endeavour to extract from the dim traditions of an unlettered age. The only existing manuscript of this the oldest epic of modern barbarous Europe, formed a part of the Cottonian collection, and is now preserved in the British Museum. It was published a few years since, with an imperfect Latin version, glossary and notes, by Thorkelin; and has been more recently translated into modern Danish verse, and published with a learned introduction, in which its connexion with the Eddaic poems of the romantic cast is pointed out, by a distinguished living scholar.* It has also been translated, or rather paraphrased, in English verse, by the late ingenious Mr Conybeare, who terminates his elegant, though not always entirely correct analysis of the work, with the following just and striking remarks:

"It can hardly have escaped notice, that the Scandinavian bard, in the general style and complexion of his poetry, approaches much more nearly to the father of the Grecian epic, than to the romances of the middle ages. If I mistake not, this similarity will readily be traced in the simplicity of his plan, in the air of probability given to all its details, even where the subject may be termed supernatural; in the length and tone of the speeches introduced, and in their frequent digression to matters of contemporary or previous history. It may be observed

* Bjówulf's Drape: Et Gothisk Helte-Digt, &c. af Angel-Saxisk paa Danske Riim ved N. F. S. Grundtvig, &c. Kjœbenhavn, 1820.

too, that the song of Beowulf, especially in its latter cantos, affords an additional argument, if any such were wanting after the labours of Percy and Ellis, against the theory which would attribute to the fictions of romance, a Saracenic origin. The dragon furnished with wings and breathing flame, the sword which melts at the touch of the Jutish blood, the unearthly light which pervades the cave of the Grendel, and beams from the magic statues presiding over that of the Fire-drake, had they occurred in a poem of later date, would in all probability have been considered by the eminent author of that theory as undoubted importations of the crusaders. But the opinions of Warton, even when erroneous, were not taken up without apparent grounds. The fictions in question do assuredly bear, if it may be so termed, an oriental rather than a northern aspect; and the solution of this phenomenon will be most successfully sought for in the hypothesis more recently suggested by those continental scholars, who, regarding the Gothic and the Sanskrit as cognate dialects, and identifying the character and worship of Odin, with that of Buddha, claim for the whole of the Scandinavian mythology, an Asiatic source of far more remote and mysterious origin."*

* Conybeare's Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, pp. 79—80.

CHAPTER VII.

Causes of the Scandinavian maritime expeditions to the South of Europe.—Wild spirit of adventure.—Sea-Kings.—Religion.—Champions and *Bersærker*.—Amazons, or *Skjöld-meyar*.—Art of ship-building.—Battle of Bravalla.—First incursions to Scotland, the Orcades, Hebrides, and Ireland.—Invasions of England.—Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok.—His death-song.

Various causes have been enumerated by historians as having contributed to produce those maritime expeditions of the Scandinavians, by which the coasts of Southern Europe were infested previous to the conversion of the North to Christianity. Among these stand most conspicuous that love of wild adventure, and the roving and predatory spirit, which mark the character of all maritime nations in the infancy of civilization. The occupation of a pirate was considered not only lawful, but honorable, in the heroic age of the North. These motives of action, so powerful in their operation on the Barbarian character, and by which the Northmen were induced, at an early period, to quit their native seats, and to roam over the seas, are supposed to have been strengthened by a usage which early acquired the force of law, and under which a portion of the people were periodically expelled by force from the country, as the increasing population pressed against the means of subsistence. These means were principally confined to fishing and the chace, and the custom of eating horse-

flesh, and of exposing infants, which prevailed from the earliest times, and were sanctioned by religion, bespeak the poverty and misery of this rude people. Indeed, the Norman chronicles in France speak of an old custom prevailing in the North, by which the eldest son inherited his father's estate, whilst the younger sons were obliged to seek an establishment beyond the seas. According to the Norman poet, Robert Wace, where a man had several sons, it was determined by lot which of them should be his heir, and the others were obliged to seek an establishment beyond the seas.

'Costume fut jadis long tems
En Dannemarch entre paiens:
Quant homme avoit plusors enfanz
Et il les avoit norriz granz,
L'un des fils retenoit par sort,
Qui ert son her apres sa mort,
Et cil sor qui le sort tornoit,
En autre terre s'en aloit.'*

It is remarkable, however, that none of the Sagas, or ancient historical songs of the North, make any mention of such a custom or law.† Still it does not follow that it may not have existed. The laws were preserved by oral tradition only. They were framed, with the consent of the people, in the public assemblies, in the open air: the sage old men also pronounced judgment, in the same public manner, according to the ancient approved customs, of which they were the depositaries, and which they handed down, by tradition, from one generation to another. None of these were reduced to writing until

* Roman de Rou, Ed. Brœndstedt, p. 60.

† Roman de Rou, Ed. Pluquet, tom. i. p. 10, Note.

long after the introduction of Christianity. At this period, emigration had ceased, and consequently no mention is made of this manner of providing for younger sons, although the law of primogeniture, as to the descent of real property, was firmly established, at least in Norway.* The Scandinavian nations were broken into petty states, like the tribes of Greece in its heroic age, each of which had its chieftain or king, and all of whom were frequently engaged in implacable wars, the result of hereditary feuds. These chieftains, at first elective, by degrees became hereditary. Sometimes the succession was divided, the younger sons retaining the title of kings, and becoming sea-rovers: at others, they agreed, when there were two sons, that they should reign alternately for a limited period, one over the sea, and the other over the land. Thus the practice of sea-roving became the favorite pursuit, and, it might almost be said, the most graceful accomplishment of princes and nobles, and was surrounded with all the lustre of chivalry. The younger sons of the kings and Jarls, who had no other inheritance but the ocean, naturally collected around their standards the youth of the inferior orders, who were equally destitute. Thus the best and bravest of the nation were launched upon the waves, and the chieftains who followed this mode of life are distinguished in the Sagas by the appropriate appellation of Sea-Kings:—"And they are rightly named Sea-Kings," says the author of the Ynlinga-Saga, "who never seek shelter under a roof, and never drain their drinking horn at a cottage fire."†

* Depping, Histoire des Normands, tom. i. p. 22.

† Depping, tom. i. pp. 30—34. Snorre, Heimskringla, tom. i. Ynlinga-Saga, cap. xxxiv.

It is easy to see, that all these circumstances combined tended to give the national character a strong impulse to maritime enterprises, and to stimulate it by the desire of renown and wealth, which last was more precariously acquired by the peaceful pursuits of commerce. These were sometimes indeed mingled with those of sea-roving, and the strange and apparently incompatible union of the characters of king, merchant, and pirate, were seen united in one individual. Thus we read in the Saga of Egill Skallagrimson, that Kveldulf, the grandfather of Egill, was a powerful chieftain in the province now called Bergens Still, whilst Harald Hárfager was pursuing his career of conquest in that part of Norway. Kveldulf had two sons, Thorolf and Grim. He was pressed by king Harald to come to his court, and become one of his liege men, but declined, and sent off his son Thorolf in his stead. Thorolf was favourably received by the king, and afterwards distinguished himself as one of Harald's Champions in the battle of Hafursfjord which decided the contest for the sovereignty of Norway. He afterwards married the rich widow of one of his companions in arms, and became a wealthy and powerful man in the northernmost parts, where he dwelt. He was subsequently sent by Harald to collect the tribute of skins and peltry due by the Finnas to the kings of Norway. He was generous and magnificent in his style of hospitality, and it happened one summer that when Harald visited Halgoland with a retinue of three hundred followers, Thorolf met the king with a train of five hundred men, and entertained him sumptuously for several days. On the king's departure, Thorolf presented him with a long ship completely equipped for war. Now there dwelt in these parts two men, the sons

of Hilderid, who envied and hated Thorolf, and poisoned the mind of the king against him by false accusations that he had not duly accounted for the tribute of peltry collected from the Finnas. Harald summoned him to appear at court, but Thorolf refused to obey the summons, surrendered his fief, and continued to live on his own private means. These were amply sufficient to enable him to entertain a hundred retainers in his hall, from the produce of his flocks and herds, added to the herring and stock fishery, and what could be obtained from gathering the eggs of the wild sea birds. After continuing to live quietly for some time in this simple and patriarchal manner, he at last associated himself with Faravid, a petty king of the Cwenas in Norrland, in order to assist him in an expedition against the Pareli of Kyrjálaland, eastward of the gulf of Bothnia, where they acquired a rich booty. With the proceeds of his prizes, he loaded a large ship with dried fish, hides, whale oil, and costly peltories, which he sent to England in the year 878, and bartered them for a rich cargo of cloth, honey, wine, and corn, with which they returned to their own country. Harald ordered the ship with its valuable cargo to be seized by way of reprisals for the supposed delinquency of Thorolf. Next summer, Thorolf again cruized as a Vikingr in the Baltic sea, and gave chace to a large fleet sailing through the Sound, among which was a Norwegian ship laden with corn, honey, and malt going for the use of the king's household. He seized this ship, and returned home in safety, but was soon after overtaken by the vengeance of Harald, who surprised and slew the intrepid sea-rover.*

* Müller, Saga-bibliothek, tom. i. p. 109.

Religion too had its influence in promoting this spirit of adventurous enterprise. That professed by the people of the North bore the impress of a wild and audacious spirit, such as, according to tradition, marked the character of its founder. Whatever distinction of sects may have existed among the Northern pagans, and however various the objects of their worship, the favorite god of the Vikingar was a Mars and a Moloch. The religion of Odin stimulated the desire of martial renown and the thirst of blood, by promising the joys of Valhall as the reward of those who fell gloriously in battle. His ministering spirits, the Valkyrur hovered over the bloody field, watched the fortune of battle, and snatching the souls of those who were doomed to fall, bore them away to the blissful presence of the god of war. Those who adhered to the more ancient deities of the North, or rejected indiscriminately all the national objects of religious worship, were animated by a still wilder and more lawless spirit. Some of these chieftains carried their audacity so far as to defy the gods themselves. Thus we are told in the Sagas, of two famous heroes, who never sacrificed to the national deities, and yet spurned the yoke of Christianity. King Olaf the Saint demanded of one of them, who offered to enter his military service, of what religion he was?—"My brother in arms and I,"—said Gauthakon to the king, "are neither Christians nor Pagans. We have no faith, but in our arms and our strength to vanquish our enemies, and those we have ever found sufficient." So also in the Saga of Olaf Tryggvason, another of these heroes says: "I have no faith in idols: often have I encountered giants and evil spirits; they have never been

able to prevail against me. I rely solely upon my strength and my courage."*

Their national freedom, and that proud and independent bearing which always marks the Barbarian character, contributed to swell this lofty spirit, which was also fomented by the songs extemporised or recited by the Skalds in praise of martial renown, or the glorious exploits of their ancestors. The kings and other chieftains were surrounded by Champions,† who were devoted to their fortunes, and dependent upon their favour for advancement. These warriors were sometimes seized with a sort of phrenzy—a *furor Martis*,—produced by their excited imaginations dwelling upon the images of war and glory,—and perhaps increased by those potations of stimulating liquors in which the people of the North, like other uncivilized tribes, indulged to great excess. When this madness was upon them, these Orlandos committed the wildest extravagances, attacked indiscriminately friends and foes, and even waged war against inanimate nature—the rocks and trees. At other times, they defied each other to mortal combat in some lonely and desert isle. The ancient language of the North had a particular term appropriated to distinguish the Champions who were subject to this species of martial insanity. They were called *Bersærker*, and the name occurs so frequently in the Sagas, that we must conclude that this disease prevailed, generally, among the Vikingar, who passed their lives in roving the seas in search of spoil and adventures.‡

* Depping, tom. i. pp. 30—36. Münter, Kirchengeschichte von Dännemark und Norwegen, tom. i. p. 172.

† *Kappi*, Icel. *Kæmpe*, Dan.

‡ See the remarkable story of the two Bersærker whom Hakon

Even the female sex did not escape this wide spread contagion of martial fury, and the love of wild and perilous adventure. Women of illustrious birth sometimes became pirates and roved the seas. More frequently, however, they shared the toils and dangers of land-battles. These Amazons were called *Skjöld-meyar*, or Virgins of the Shield.* The romantic Sagas are filled with the most striking traits of their heroic bearing. In the Völsunga-saga, we have the romantic tale of Alfhilda, daughter of Sigurdr, king of the Ostrogoths, who was chaste, brave, and fair. She was always veiled from the gaze of vulgar curiosity, and lived in a secluded bower, where she was guarded by two Champions of prodigious strength and valour. Sigurdr had proclaimed, that whoever aspired to his daughter's hand must vanquish the two gigantic Champions,—his own life to be the forfeit if he failed in the perilous enterprise. Alf, a young Sea-King, who had already signalized himself by his heroic exploits, encountered and slew the two Champions; but Alfhilda herself was not disposed to surrender tamely. She boldly put to sea with her female companions, all clothed, like herself, in male attire, and completely armed for war. They fell in with a fleet of Vikingar, who having just lost their chieftain, elected the intrepid heroine for his successor. She continued

Jarl, the son of Sigurdr, presented to an Icelander, in Viga Styrs Saga (Müller's Saga-bibliothek, tom. i. p. 37), and in the Eyrbjggia-Saga (Müller, tom. i. p. 189), an abstract of which has been published by Sir Walter Scott, in Jamieson's Illustrations of Northern Antiquities, p. 477. The road formed by these gigantic Bersærker across the stream of lava, and the grave of the Champions, are still to be seen in Iceland. Henderson's Travels, vol. ii. p. 59.

* *Skjöldmær*, sing. *Skjöldmeyar*, plur. Icel. Skjoldmœer, Dan.

thus to rove the Baltic sea, at the head of this band of pirates, until the wide spread fame of her exploits came to the ear of Alf, her suitor, who gave chace to her squadron, and pursued it into the gulf of Finland. The brave Alfhilda gave battle. Alf boarded the bark of the princess, who made a gallant and obstinate resistance, until her helmet being cloven open by one of his Champions, disclosed to their astonished view the fair face and lovely looks of his coy mistress, who, being thus vanquished by her magnanimous lover, no longer refuses him the hand he had sought, whilst his gallant Champion espouses one of her fair companions.*

The neighbourhood of the sea with which the Scandinavian peninsula is almost entirely encircled, and the numerous friths and harbours with which the coasts are indented—all studded with islands,—and the profusion of materials for ship-building, with which the glens and mountains of these Northern countries abound, soon turned the attention of their inhabitants to the art of naval construction. This art was held in great honour, and even attributed to celestial invention. The miraculous ship Skidbladnir, was the most wonderful construction of the dwarfs, and Odin is represented as a skilful navigator, and the patron of naval as well as martial enterprise. As the historical and romantic Sagas term any sort of artificer in metals, stone, or wood, a *Smith*, such as the famous Smith Völundr,—the Dædalus of the North,—so they call one Thorstein, who had acquired great fame as a ship-builder, a Ship-Völundr. But the first efforts of the Northmen in this art, did not surpass those of the North American Indians, and other savage

* Depping, tom. i. pp. 50—52.

tribes; and even the fleets with which they invaded France and England, were frequently composed of small canoes, hollowed out from the trunks of trees, and so light as to be carried on men's shoulders, or dragged over the portages from one river to another. They penetrated into the interior of the country, by sailing up the rivers; and when the inhabitants opposed their progress, by bridging the streams, the indefatigable invaders carried their batteaux higher up, or transported them across the land to another watercourse. In the subsequent progress of the art of ship-building, the size of their vessels was increased, and their equipments improved. The Sagas mention the names of these different vessels, varying according to their size; such as the Snekkje, or snail,* a long, light bark with twenty banks of rowers; the *Drake*, or Dragon,† a very large ship, with the figure of a dragon, or some other fantastic animal carved upon its prow, and highly ornamented with painting and gilding, in which the Sea-Kings embarked with their Bersærker, or Champions. According to the Saga of Hrolf Krake, king of Zealand, the *dragon* Grimsnaùtr, which this monarch had captured in a sea-fight with a famous pirate, surpassed all other ships as much as Hrolf surpassed all other kings of the North. Snorre also speaks of a ship of thirty-four banks of oars, built by Olaf Tryggvason, king of Norway, which he declares to be the largest ever constructed in Norway.‡

* Snekkja, *Iceland.* Snekke, *Dan.*, rather an equivocal appellation for a ship.

† Dreki, *Iceland.* Drage, *Dan.*

‡ Depping, tom. i. pp. 69—74. Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Sini, cap. xcv.

For the purpose of organizing the maritime forces of the country, the coasts of Scandinavia were divided from very early times into convenient districts called *Hundara*, each of which furnished a certain number of vessels, which were manned by a sort of maritime conscription. This regulation was intended both for offensive and defensive war. The old law by which it was established, was revived in Norway by king Hakon the Good, son of Harald Hárfager. This compulsory service was called in Swedish *Skeppsvist*, and if the king did not think fit in any particular year to equip a fleet for sea, an equivalent was exacted, similar to the *ship-money*, so famous in the constitutional history of England. The fitting out a piratical expedition annually, thus at last became an inveterate usage in the Northern kingdoms; and the principal ground of dissatisfaction on the part of the Swedes against their king St Olaf, was his omission to make every year a predatory incursion against Finland, Esthonia, or Courland, according to the custom which had been uniformly observed from time immemorial. This custom is also referred to in the Anglo-Saxon laws, and the first constitution of Etheldred directs an expedition to be in readiness every year immediately after Easter. This may indeed have been intended for defence against the Northern pirates, but it proves the existence of similar institutions in all these countries, intended to keep in readiness the means of naval warfare, whether offensive or defensive.*

The immense number of vessels mentioned as composing the Northern fleets, may be accounted for by the circumstance of their being, generally speaking, of a

* Depping, tom. i. p. 75.

diminutive size, like the ships of the Greeks in the time of the Trojan war. Harald Hildetand was a powerful maritime prince, according to the naval resources of that time, and his fleets are described as covering the Sound, and even bridging over this Northern Hellespont from the shores of Zealand to those of Scania. But his reign
735. and life were terminated at the fatal battle of Bravalla, fought on the coast of Scania, in consequence of a defiance between him and Sigurdr Ring, a prince of the Sviar, descended from Ivar Vidfadme, who endeavoured to dethrone his relative, Halland, king of Sweden. At this famous battle all the maritime forces of the North were assembled, and there were thousands of vessels and batteaux engaged. All the sea-kings and land-kings, chieftains, and pirates of the North, rushed to this scene of carnage with their Champions. Two of the most celebrated Skjöldmeyar, or Virgins of the Shield, of that time, Hetha and Visina, brought a reinforcement to the king of Zealand, the one of a hundred Amazonians like herself, the other a troop of savage Svends, armed with long swords and small bucklers of an azure hue. All the tribes bordering on the Baltic were represented in this great battle. The Slaves, the Livonians, and Saxons, with a famous Vikingr, named Ubbo, also joined the party of Harald, who counted seventy-four celebrated Bersærker, or champions. Sigurdr, his adversary, reckoned ninety-six, all of whom are immortalized in the lays of the Skalds, several of whom were present and actively engaged in the combat. The kings and their champions disembarked and fought hand to hand on the shore. After a furious and protracted contest, the Norwegian archers of Tellemark decided the fortune of the day. Harald perished on the field with

fifteen other kings; and the poets who have painted this truly Homeric battle, not satisfied with the mortal agency by which the victory was obtained, have represented Odin himself as taking part against the Danes. The heroic Harald, old, infirm, and blind, was seated on his battle car. Odin, who had been his tutelary deity, and from whom he claimed his descent, had formerly revealed to him the secret in the military art by which the ranks of an enemy might be penetrated with an order of battle in the form of a wedge. Harald learns from his charioteer that Sigurdr is turning against him this very tactic; and immediately perçeives that the day is lost, his enemy's chariot being guided by Odin himself. In vain does he implore the God of War to grant him one more victory. The perfidious deity turns upon the venerable monarch, and despatches him with his war-club. His body is soon covered with heaps of the slain, but is discovered after the battle, and graced with magnificent funeral obsequies. It was burnt on a funeral pile with his armour, chariot, and war-horse, by order of Sigurdr, who, adds the Skald,

> 'Bade Harald to Valhalla ride,
> There to prepare a place for friend and foe.'*

So long as the Saxons and Frisians continued to profess the same religion with the Northern nations, they

* Saxo Grammaticus, lib. viii. p. 226. Ed. Klotzius. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. iii. p. 359. Müller, Sagabibliothek, tom. ii. p. 487. Geijr, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 533—545. M. Depping is mistaken in supposing that the battle of Bravalla was a sea-fight. See the Danish translation of his work, tom. i. p. 115. Note.

united with the Scandinavians in their predatory expeditions to the coasts of Britain and the south of Europe. But when the Saxons upon the Elbe were converted by the conquering sword of Charlemagne to the Christianity professed by him, and the Saxons in England were persuaded by milder means to embrace the new religion, the Danes and Saxons ceased to be friends, and the ancient enmity of the former to the Franks was envenomed by religious fanaticism. The cruelties exercised by Charlemagne against the pagan Saxons in Nordalbingia, had roused the resentment of their neighbours and fellow worshippers of Odin in Jutland and the isles of the Danish archipelago. Their wild spirit of adventure and lust of plunder was now wrought up to a pitch of phrenzy by religious fanaticism. Hence the ravages of the Northmen were directed with peculiar fury against the monasteries and churches in France and England, and against the priests of a religion rendered doubly hateful to them, in consequence of the attempts made by the successors of Charlemagne in the empire, to force it upon them as a badge of national slavery. The Danish and Norwegian kings and Jarls, who yielded to these attempts, and complied with the wishes of the emperors by embracing Christianity, rendered themselves unpopular with their countrymen, whilst those who clung to the ancient faith of their fathers, and even persecuted the votaries of the new religion, were honored and beloved as patriots and heroes. From this period the great struggle between the North and the South assumed the character of a religious as well as national war, and the enmity of the Scandinavian invaders to the nations they had plundered and vanquished could only

be appeased by their own conversion to Christianity, which finally put a period to their predatory incursions.*

Such was the operation of the various causes which produced and continued the maritime expeditions and incursions of the Northmen to the western and southern countries of Europe. The Saxons and Frisians led the way for the Normans and Danes in these adventures. The first expeditions of the latter were directed against Scotland and the Orcades, from whence they soon reached the western isles of Scotland, Mann, and Ireland. One of the ancient kings of Denmark, Frode III, who, according to Suhm's chronology, reigned about the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian æra, gave his daughter, Ulvilda, in marriage to Thubar, king of Scotland. Fergus, the reputed founder of the first race of Scottish kings, is said to have sprung from this alliance. At all events, he received some aid from the North, to extend his dominion in Scotland.†

The Irish annals term the Northern Sea-kings, Lochlanach; the Scandinavian foreigners in general, Gâl, or as they were afterwards called Ostmanni, (Eastmen); and the land from which they came Lochlin.‡ The strangers who invaded Morven and Erin were the Northmen.‖ In 852, Olauf, king of Lochlin, came to Erin, and all the Northern adventurers submitted to him, and

* Montesquieu, Grandeur et Decadence des Romains, ch. 16. Hume, Hist. of England, vol. i. ch. ii. Depping, Histoire des Normands, tom. i. p. 101. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. i. p. 536. Münter, Kirchengeschichte, tom. i. pp. 232, 295, 296, 399.

† Græters Suhm, tom. i. p. 214.

‡ Johnstone, Antiquitates Hibernicæ, p. 56.

‖ F. Magnussen, Skandinaviske Literaturselskabs Skrifters, 1813.

he levied tribute on the Irish.* He reigned in Dublin, whilst Ivar and Sigtrygg, two other Northmen chieftains, established minor kingdoms in Waterford and Limerick.† The dominion of the *Eastmen* over that part of Ireland lasted until the Anglo-Norman invasion by Henry II, and marks of their existence as a distinct race may be traced long afterwards.‡

755-794. The first incursion into the South of England by the Northmen was in the reign of Offa, king of Mercia. They landed from their barks, and began to plunder, but the Anglo-Saxon peasantry assembled and put the invaders to flight. Offa sent a detachment to pursue them. Some were taken prisoners and conducted into the presence of the king, to whom they declared that they were only a small body sent to spy out the land, and would be soon followed by a more formidable expedition of their countrymen. The magnanimous Offa commanded them to be sent back to their companions in safety, and to tell the Danes that so long as king Offa reigned such would be the treatment they should receive at his hands. This conduct astonished and awed the wild adventurers, and England remained free from their incursions during the reign of this prince.‖

849. But the first great invasions of England by the Northmen took place in the reign of Ethelwulf, king of the West Saxons, and the father of Alfred the Great. "In

* Annals of Ulster, p. 64.

† Ware, pp. 75, 76.

‡ It appears from the plea-roll of the 4 Edw.II, that an inquisition was taken at Limerick respecting the church lands in that year (A.D. 1201) upon the oaths of twelve English, (Anglo-Normans) twelve Ostmanni, (Eastmen) and twelve Irish. Johnstone, p. 87.

‖ Matthew Paris, Hist. Maj. tom. i. p. 22.

those days," say the Anglo-Saxon historians, "the omnipotent God sent innumerable hordes of cruel invaders, who spared neither age nor sex, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, Vandals, and Frisians, who from the beginning of king Ethelwulf's reign to the coming in of duke William of Normandy, for the period of nearly two hundred years, laid waste this sinful land, and destroyed both man and beast."*

In 851, the Northmen first ventured to winter in the isle of Thanet, from which they made in the following year a formidable incursion against the Anglo-Saxons. They entered the Thames with three hundred and fifty barks, plundered Canterbury and London, and marched into Mercia. From thence they turned Southward, and entered Surrey. Ethelwulf collected the West Saxons to repel the invaders; and at Aclea—'the field of oaks'—the two nations encountered each other in a most desperate and deadly conflict. According to the testimony of Asser, the friend and biographer of king Alfred, so great a slaughter of the Northern invaders had not been known before that day, or during his experience since. Several other incursions intervened with various fortunes on both sides, and marked by the ordinary circumstances of horror attending these adventures, until the invasion of the north of England by Ragnar Lodbrok.†

The remarkable story of this famous adventurer has been so disfigured by conflicting traditions and poetic and romantic fictions, as to exercise all the skill of the

* Matthew Westmonst. Flores Hist. 302. Brompton, Ed. Twysden, p. 82.

† Turner's Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. b. ii. pp. 80—96. 8vo. Ed. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 171.

historical critics of the North to reconcile its chronology and other circumstances with the accounts given in the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon annals.* One thing is certain, that the Ragnar Lodbrok who reigned in Denmark and Sweden in the latter part of the eighth century, could not have been the same chieftain who invaded France and England about the middle of the ninth, and whose sons were the pupils and companions of the celebrated adventurer Hastings. The termination of the reign of Ragnar Lodbrok, son of Sigurdr Ring, cannot be placed later than 794, according to the chronology of Suhm, or 838, according to the Icelandic annals; whilst on the other hand, the death of the Ragnar who invaded Northumbria, and was slain by the Anglo-Saxon king Ella, cannot be carried back further than 862, the year that prince usurped the Northumbrian crown. The resolution of this intricate problem of Northern history, by supposing two adventurers of the same name, seems hardly reconcileable with the Sagas and other ancient Icelandic writings, which speak of one only, and constantly assert the Ragnar Lodbrok who perished in England to be the father of Björn Iärnsida, who succeeded him in Sweden, and Sigurd Snogöje who reigned in Scania and Zealand. But it is probable that the chieftain whose exploits have been confounded with those of the more ancient Ragnar, was a prince of Jutland, whose real name was Reginfred, or Ragenfred, and who, having been expelled from his dominions during the reign of Harald Klak, became a sea-king, and subsequently in-

* Suhm, Kritiske Historie, tom. ii. pp. 611—720. Müller, Sagabibliothek, tom. ii. pp. 474—478. Saxos og Snorros Kilder, p. 365. Geijr, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. pp. 545—605.

vaded France during the reign of Louis-le-Debonnare.*

However this may be, all the original documents, both national and foreign, agree in the main circumstances of the invasion of Northumbria by Ragnar Lodbrok, and of his cruel death, which was afterwards so savagely avenged by his sons or kindred. The English chronicles relate that in 793, the monastery of St Cuthbert in the isle of Lindisfarn, on the coast of Northumbria, near the Scottish border, was plundered by a band of Pagan adventurers from Norway and Denmark; and that in the following year a fleet of Vikingar was wrecked on the same coast, and the prince by whom it was commanded taken prisoner and put to death in a cruel manner by the natives.† The famous lay called the Lodbrokar-Quida or Biarka-mál, the death song of Ragnar Lodbrok, relates his ravaging the coast of Scotland, and his battle with three kings of Erin at Lindis-Eiri.‡ But king Ella began to reign in Northumberland seventy years afterwards, and it would seem that this apparent anachronism can only be reconciled by the supposition that the Ella spoken of in the Icelandic Sagas was some other Saxon prince of that name, all those of the blood royal being called kings by the Saxons, and Ella being

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. iii. p. 676. Müller, Saxos og Snorros Kilder, p. 158. Geijr, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 595.

† Simeon Dunel. ap. Twysden, pp. 12—111. Roger de Hovedon's Annals, ap. Saville, fol. 232—235. Chron. Sax. 56.

‡ Vitt fengom þá vangi
Verœ í *Skot.—Lands*, fjörðum.
Str. 24.
Háþom sverd-glám at morgni
Leik fyrir *Lindis-Eyri*
Vid Lofdúnga þrenna.
Str. 19.

a name so general, that the Skalds familiarly term Englishmen in general, the race of Ella, *Ello-kind.*"*

We are told in the Sagas, that Ragnar ruled his realms in peace, ignorant, as well as his queen Aslauga, in what regions his sons then were. But the rumours of their exploits reached his ear, his jealousy was excited, and he determined to set forth an expedition that should rival their fame. For this purpose, he ordered two vessels of immense size to be built, such as had never before been seen in the North. In the mean time, 'the arrow,' the signal of war, being sent through all his kingdom, summoned his Champions to arms, and his fleet was soon equipped and filled with warriors. With this apparently inadequate force, he set sail, contrary to the advice of Aslauga, to attack that part of England which had formerly been the scene of the exploits of his predecessors, Ivar Vídfadme, Harald Hildetand, and Sigurdr Ring. The expedition was driven back again to port by a tempest, when the queen repeated her warning, and accompanied it with the gift of a magical garment, to ward off danger. Ragnar again put to sea, and was at last shipwrecked on the English coast. In this emergency his courage did not desert him, but he pushed forward with his small band to ravage and plunder. Ella collected his forces to repel the invader. Ragnar, clothed with the enchanted garment he had received from his beloved Aslauga, and armed with the spear with which he had slain the guardian serpent of Thora,† four times

* Snorre, Heimskringla, Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. xiii.

† This alludes to the poetical history of Ragnar, in which he is represented as obtaining his first bride, Thora, by slaying the reptile or Serpent, *Ormur*, by whom she was guarded against importunate suitors, which is alluded to in the first stanza of the Lodbrokar-

pierced the Saxon ranks, dealing death on every side, whilst his own body was invulnerable to the blows of his enemies. His friends and Champions fell one by one around him, and he was at last taken prisoner alive. Being asked who he was, he preserved an indignant silence. Then king Ella said:—"If this man will not speak, he shall endure so much the heavier punishment for his obduracy and contempt." So he ordered him to be thrown into the dungeon full of serpents, where he should remain till he told his name. Ragnar, being thrown into the dungeon, sat there a long time before the serpents attacked him; which being noticed by the spectators, they said he must be a brave man indeed whom neither arms nor vipers could hurt. Ella, hearing this, ordered his enchanted vest to be stripped off, and, soon afterwards, the serpents clung to him on all sides. Then Ragnar said, "how the young cubs would roar if they knew what the old boar suffers," and expired with a laugh of defiance.

The Northern Skalds, not satisfied with this sufficiently romantic account of the fate of Ragnar Lodbrok, have put into his mouth an heroic lay, or death-song, which they suppose him to have composed and sung in this dreadful prison. The first twenty-three strophes of this song, the whole of which has reached our times, probably constituted the war-song of Ragnar and his followers. It gives an account of his sea-roving expeditions and exploits in various lands. The remaining strophes were probably added after the death of the king, and may have been composed, as some assert, by his queen Aslauga, or Kráka, or else by some of the co-

quida, and is elegantly related by Saxo Grammaticus, probably from some other ancient lay, lib. ix. p. 261.

temporary or later Skalds. They express, in the strongest manner, the feelings by which the Northern warrior was notoriously actuated, and some of the expressions are substantially the same which history attributes to Ragnar on this occasion, the style only being more poetical.*

The last strophe of this lay may be rendered as follows:—

'Cease my strain! I hear Them call
Who bid me hence to Odin's hall!†
High seated in their blest abodes
I soon shall quaff the drink of Gods.
The hours of Life have glided by—
I fall! but laughing will I die!
The hours of Life have glided by—
I fall! but laughing will I die!!'

* The best edition of this celebrated lay, is that published by Professor Rafn, at Copenhagen, in 1826, with Danish, Latin, and French versions, and a complete critical apparatus, under the title of "*Krákumál* sive Epicedium Ragnaris Lodbroci Regis Daniæ."

† The Dísir—messengers of the gods.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wars of Charlemagne on the Elbe.—Invasion of France by Hastings and the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok.—Normans plunder the coasts of Spain and Italy, and enter the Mediterranean.—Sack of Luna by Hastings.—Return of Hastings to France.—His conversion to Christianity.

THE empire of the Franks, which had been founded in Gaul at the end of the fifth century of the Christian æra, by Chlodowig, or Clovis, was constantly encroaching upon their more barbarous neighbours the Saxons. The latter at length sought aid from their Pagan brethren, the Danes, and appear to have received assistance from a petty prince of Jutland, named *Hamleth*, the prototype of Shakspeare's poetical creation. Once brought in contact with these great contending nations, they soon became familiarly acquainted with the coasts of Gaul, which had not yet acquired its modern name of France, and to which they gave the name of Valland, and afterwards of Frankland. The Frankish chroniclers mention, for the first time, an invasion of their country by the Scandinavians in the commencement of the sixth century. Clovis having been defeated by the treachery of several of his chieftains, one of them fled from the vengeance of his monarch, and found a refuge with Cochiliac, or Higelac, as he is called in the Anglo-Saxon poem of Bjowulf, who is supposed to have been

a petty king who reigned in the island of Fionia.* To avenge the cause of his guest, the Danish prince fitted out an expedition against Walland; his vessels penetrated the mouths of the Meuse, and were already laden with booty; but the Vikingar, having remained too long on shore, were attacked by the Franks, who defeated them, and recovered back their plunder. This was the first and the last appearance of the Normans upon the coasts of France during the period of the Merovingian dynasty. Under that of the Carlovingian princes, they renewed their incursions, and even extended them to the southern coasts of Gaul. We are told that Charlemagne saw a fleet of Norman pirates from the windows of his palace, in the port of Narbonne, and, surprised at their audacity in approaching these distant coasts of his extensive empire, lamented the fate of his successors, who, he foresaw, would be unable to oppose an effectual barrier against their invasions. In the bloody war of extermination which he carried on against the Pagan Saxons, Charlemagne transported ten thousand of that nation into the interior of his possessions, and established in their stead a tribe of the Slaves, or Vends, called the
807. Obotrites, who were hereditary enemies of the Danes. Götrick, Gudröd, or Godofried, king of Jutland, attempted to expel the Obotrites from their new possessions in Nordalbingia. But Charlemagne, having assembled the counts and vassals of Friesland to defend the colony he had planted, Godefried, after having ravaged Nordalbingia, fled to the small islands of the Danish archipelago, beyond the reach of the strong arm of his imperial competitor. This Jutish prince first erected the

* See Grundtvig's transl. of Bjowulf, Inledning, p. 61.

wall of earth across the neck of the Cimbric Chersonesus, from the Eyder to the Schley, called *Dannewerk*, to serve as a bulwark to defend his little kingdom against the powerful monarchy of the Franks, whilst Charlemagne founded what has since become the rich and flourishing city of Hamburg, in order to bridle the barbarous nations north of the Elbe.*

Godefrid soon afterwards again appeared on the coasts 810.
of Friesland with a fleet of two hundred barks, from which he landed with his followers at three different points, dispersed the Frisians who attempted to oppose his invasion, slew their duke Rurick, and levied a tribute of one hundred pounds of silver, which the Frisians brought to his treasurer, and threw into a basin of metal in his presence. The treasurer judged of the alloy in the metal by its sound, and confiscated all the money which did not ring to his satisfaction. Godefrid attempted, by a sudden movement, to surprise the emperor of the West in his palace at Aix la Chapelle, but was himself suddenly cut off in the midst of his designs by the assassin's dagger. Hemming, his nephew and successor, made a truce with Charlemagne, and in the treaty which followed, it was stipulated that the Eyder should form the boundary between the Danes and the vast empire of the Franks.†

* Suhm Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 1—12. Depping, Histoire des Normands, tom. i. pp. 90—105.

† Adam. Bremens. Hist. Eccles. tom. i. lib. i. cap. 13. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 18. The Eyder has ever since continued the boundary between the Danish States and the German Empire, if we except only the perhaps doubtful conquests of Henry the Fowler, the first Emperor of the Saxon line, north of that river. The duchy of Holstein, south of the Eyder, is held by the Danish

This empire rapidly decayed on the death of the great man by whose genius and activity it was upheld. Under his degenerate successor, Louis le Debonnaire, the means of defence were almost entirely neglected; the great vassals of the crown were more intent upon their own personal aggrandizement than the safety of their country; and the wealth of the nation was wasted in lavish donations upon a rapacious clergy. In this state of helplessness, the Normans ravaged with fire and sword the coasts of the empire, from the Elbe to the Loire. In 827, they passed along the coasts of Gaul, and crossing the bay of Biscay, made a descent in Gallicia, where they were defeated by Ramiro, the Gothic king of Leon. The Normans continued their voyage along the shores of the Peninsula, penetrated into the Mediterranean, and landed upon the banks of the Guadalquiver, where they amassed a great booty at Seville.*

The deadly feuds between the children of Louis le Debonnaire, and their unnatural rebellion against their

monarch under a different title from that of the crown of Denmark, and had always formed a part of the German empire, until that empire was dissolved in 1806, when the Danish government published an ordinance re-uniting the duchy with the other states of the monarchy. The ancient inscription which had hitherto stood on the gates of Rendsburg, "EIDORI ROMANI TERMINUS IMPERII,"—was taken down, and deposited in the arsenal as a relic of antiquity. But on the formation of the present Germanic confederation, the king of Denmark joined the new league as duke of Holstein, and the duchy now forms one of the seventeen principal members of the confederation, and is represented in the diet at Frankfort, and contributes its quota to the military contingent of the federal army.

* Depping, tom. i. p. 110. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 18.

parent, rendered the country of the Franks an easy prey to its cruel invaders. The Normans established themselves in the island of Normoutier, at the mouth of the Loire, from which they made incursions into every part of the country, ravaging, pillaging, and slaughtering. On the death of Louis, his sons renewed their insane quarrels. The two armies encountered each other at 841.
Fontenai, in Burgundy. The result of this bloody battle hastened the destruction of the Frankish monarchy. The free population of the country had dwindled to an inconsiderable number, in comparison with those who, reduced to the condition of serfs, had no interest in defending the soil which they cultivated. The country being thus stripped of its military defence, and the flower of its nobility having perished in that fatal field, a panic spread among the nation; none dared resist the Normans; none could repel them.*

Robert Wace, one of the oldest Anglo-Norman poets, who wrote his rhymed chronicle in the twelfth century, under the patronage of the kings of England of the Norman line, has described the deplorable condition of things after the battle of Fontenai, with touching simplicity:—

La péri de France la flor,
E des Baronz tuit li meillor.
Ainsi trovèrent Paenz, terre
Vuide de gent, bonne à conquerre.†

The final partition of the empire of Charlemagne 843.
among the children of Louis le Debonnaire, by the treaty

* Du Chesne, Script. rer. Franc. tom. iii. p. 334. Sismondi, Histoire des Français, tom. iii. p. 64.

† Roman de Rou, Edit. de Pluquet, p. 16. Brôndsted, p. 62.

of Verdun, would seem to have facilitated the defence of each detached portion against the inroads of the Barbarians. France fell to the lot of Charles le Chauve; but he had the double task of restraining the turbulence of the great vassals in the interior, and of defending the maritime frontier against the Normans and Saracens. The former entered the Loire under Hastings, one of the most famous of their chieftains, ravaged the banks of the river, and sailed up to Tours, which they attacked. The courage of the burghers was excited and sustained by the sight of the relics of St Martin, the patron of their city, and they fortunately succeeded in repelling the invaders. Of all the Northern invaders, Hastings had rendered himself most detested in France, by the extent and cruelty of his ravages. He is accordingly pursued by the vengeance of the monkish chroniclers, and such immortality as their imprecations could confer, the Sea-King has received. He is represented by them as beholding with delight the tears of the Franks, whom he hated and despised. His daring and adventurous spirit was not easily satiated with plunder and slaughter. On his return to the North, Hastings associated himself with Björn, one of the sons of the famous Ragnar Lodbrok. The mothor of Björn had, by means of magic charms, rendered her son's body invulnerable, except his side, on which he wore an iron plate, from which circumstance he acquired the name of *Järnsida*, or Ironside.

Hasting y vint premierement
Qui fit maint pour,et maint dolent.
Compains et maitre fut *Bier*,
Que l'on clamoit *cote de fer*
Fiz fut *Lobroc*, un Danoie Roi
Qui tout temps fut de malefoy.

Ne sai c'est veir, mez ço dit l'on,
Que la mere, qui l'ont porté,
L'ont si charmé et enchanté,
Que fer ne le pout entamer,
Ne par ferir, ne par bouter.*

The chronicles of the duchy of Normandy tell us that Hastings had himself been formerly expelled from his native country in virtue of the law, compelling all the sons of each family, save one, to expatriate themselves, and to seek their fortune on the seas or in foreign lands. This ancient law was again put in force by king Ragnar Lodbrok, in order to rid himself of the turbulent youth whom he could not restrain or find employment for at home. On drawing the lots, from which no rank was exempted, one of them fell on Björn, and the king charged Hastings with the care of his son. They fitted out a joint expedition, to which were associated numerous adventurers from all the countries of the North. Arriving on the coast of France, the expedition was divided into two fleets, one of which entered the Seine, and penetrated to the Oise; the other, consisting of sixty-seven long barks, directed its course towards Brittany, where the invaders were received with open arms by some of the native chieftains of the ancient race, who had never been reconciled to the government of the Franks. The Norman invaders were conducted by these discontented Bretons, into the mouth of the Loire, from which 843.
they ascended the river, and plundered Nantz. Having reimbarked, they again retired to an island at the mouth of the river, where they fortified themselves, built huts, and made a permanent establishment, in which they

* Roman de Rou, Edit. Bröndsted, p. 54.

secured their prisoners and plunder. This nest of pirates continued to infest the banks of the Loire; sometimes in their light barks, sometimes on foot, and at others on horseback, they spread universal terror, burning the monasteries and ravaging the fields and towns. In one of their expeditions by sea, the fleet of the Normans was driven by the winds and waves towards Spain, and stranded on the coast of Gallicia. They landed and attacked Corruna, but were repelled, and a part of their fleet destroyed. With the remnant, consisting of only thirty barks, they made sail towards the mouth of the Garonne, ascended the river, sacked Bordeaux, and pushed their incursions inland to Saintes, on one side, and to Tarbes and Toulouse on the other. The duke of Gascony was defeated in an attempt to repel the invaders; but their progress was at last stopped near Tarbes, where they were surprised and defeated with great slaughter by the brave peasantry of the country. The anniversary of this day of vengeance is still celebrated in that city, on the 21st of May in every year.*

844. The northern adventurers formed in the Garonne an establishment similar to the retreat they had acquired at the mouth of the Loire. From thence they equipped an expedition for the peninsula. They first landed at Lisbon, and afterwards, continuing their voyage to the South, entered the Guadalquivir, attacked Seville, and demolished its fortifications. Here they came in contact with the Arab conquerors of Spain. The contrast between these two races of fanatic Barbarians, the one issuing forth from the frozen regions of

* Depping, tom. i. ch. iv. pp. 118—133. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 121—128. Sismondi, Histoire des Français, tom. iii. p. 80.

the North, the other from the burning sands of Asia and Africa, forms one of the most striking pictures presented by history. But the sectaries of Odin prevailed over those of Mohammed, and they carried off in safety the prisoners and booty, which were the sole objects of their enterprise. The Moors took them for magicians, and called them by a word, signifying, in Arabic, *miscreants*. They subsequently passed the outlet of the Mediterranean, which, to them, seemed another Baltic strait, and which is called, in the Sagas, *Niærva Sund*.* From this time, the straits of Gibraltar became familiar to their navigators.†

In the following year, the Normans again entered the Seine, ascended the river, burning and destroying all before them. As they approached Paris, the monasteries were evacuated, and the relics of the saints transported into the interior of the kingdom. The invaders took possession of the fauxbourgs on the south bank of the river, which were not fortified like the isle de la Cité. Charles found a refuge in the monastery of St Denis, then, probably, the strongest fortified place of the kingdom. Here he was compelled, by the advice of his nobles, to receive the chief of the piratical band, Regnier, or Ragnar, son of Sivard, king of Ledra, with whom the humiliated monarch of the Franks stipulated to pay a tribute of 7,000 pounds of silver, in return for which, the Normans were to evacuate the kingdom, not to return unless recalled as auxiliaries. Ragnar returned to Denmark with an immense booty; but his followers spread over their native country a contagious disease

* Snorre, Ynlinga-Saga, cap. i.

† Depping, tom. i. p. 134. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 124—130.

they had contracted in France. Ragnar exhibited to his countrymen, as the trophies of his triumph, a piece of one of the beams of the famous abbey of St Germain, at Paris, and a nail from the gates of the city; and alluding to the relics of the saints, declared that he had found the Franks a nation of cowards, and that, in France, the dead were more to be feared than the living.*

These predatory expeditions were resumed under Godfrid, son of Harald Klak, who took up a position at the mouth of the Scheldt, from which he ravaged the territories of the Franks. His incursion was followed by successive expeditions of Hastings, Sydroc, and Björn Iron-Side, with a repetition of the same horrors on the part of the Vikingar. The contemporary annals are filled with touching accounts of the sufferings of a defenceless people in a desolated country, where the land no longer yielded rent to the lord, the fields and vineyards were laid waste, the peasantry scattered abroad, the highways deserted by pilgrim and mer-
857. chant. It was at this period that Paris was again attacked by the Barbarians, who entered the city, which had been abandoned to their fury. Some of the churches and monasteries were burnt, others were ransomed by the payment of immense sums, which Charles was obliged to levy upon his already ruined subjects. Hastings proposed to the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok, and his other followers, an expedition against Rome, of whose wealth and splendour they had heard much, without knowing precisely in what part of Italy

* Depping, tom. i. ch. iv. pp. 136—141. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 134. Sismondi, Histoire des Français, tom. iii. p. 123.

the capital of the Christian world was situate. He set sail with a hundred barks, pillaged the coasts of Spain on his voyage, and even attacked those of Mauratania, in Africa, penetrated into the Mediterranean, and ravaged the Balearic isles. They finally entered an Italian port, which they mistook for Rome, but which was Luna, an ancient city founded by the Etruscans, and whose high walls, flanked with towers, and crowned with public edifices, deceived the northern adventurers. The inhabitants were celebrating the festival of Christmas in the cathedral, when the news was spread among them of the arrival of a fleet of unknown strangers. The church was instantly deserted, and the citizens ran to shut the gates, and prepared to defend their town. Hastings sent a herald to inform the count and bishop of Luna that he and his band were Northmen, conquerors of the Franks, who designed no harm to the inhabitants of Italy, but merely sought to repair their shattered barks. In order to inspire more confidence, Hastings pretended to be weary of the wandering life he had so long led, and desired to find repose in the bosom of the Christian church. The Bishop and the Count furnished the fleet with the needful succour; Hastings was baptised; but still his Norman followers were not admitted within the city walls. Their chief was then obliged to resort to another stratagem: he feigned to be dangerously ill; his camp resounded with the lamentations of his followers; he declared his intention of leaving the rich booty he had acquired to the church, provided they would grant him sepulture in holy ground. The wild howl of the Normans soon announced the death of their chieftain. The inhabitants followed the funeral proces-

sion to the church, but at the moment they were about to deposit his apparently lifeless body, Hastings started up from his coffin, and, seizing his sword, struck down the officiating bishop. His followers instantly obeyed this signal of treachery: they drew from under their garments their concealed weapons, massacred the clergy and others who assisted at the ceremony, and spread havoc and consternation throughout the town. Having thus become master of Luna, the Norman chieftain discovered his error, and found that he was still far from Rome, which was not likely to fall so easy a prey. After having transported on board his barks the wealth of the city, as well as the most beautiful women, and the young men capable of bearing arms or of rowing, he put to sea, intending to return to the North.

The Italian traditions as to the destruction of this city, resemble more nearly the romance of Romeo and Juliet than the history of the Scandinavian adventurer. According to these accounts, the prince of Luna was inflamed with the beauty of a certain young empress, then travelling in company with the emperor her husband. Their passion was mutual, and the two lovers had recourse to the following stratagem, in order to accomplish their union. The empress feigned to be grievously sick: she was believed to be dead; her funeral obsequies were duly celebrated; but she escaped from the sepulchre, and secretly rejoined her lover. The emperor had no sooner heard of their crime, than he marched to attack the residence of the ravisher, and avenged himself by the entire destruction of the once flourishing city of Luna. The only point of resemblance between these two stories, consists in the romantic incident of the

destruction of the city by means of a feigned death, a legend which spread abroad over Italy and France.*

One of the Northern chieftains, whom Hastings had left behind in his Italian expedition, established himself, with his followers, in an island of the Seine, near Paris. From this retreat they ravaged the surrounding country. Charles le Chauve was compelled to raise the blockade of this island, by the disaffection of his turbulent barons, and to treat with the invaders, although experience had shown the folly of thus encouraging them to renew their incursions. In consequence of a treaty made at the castle of Verberie, Björn promised to quit France, and actually sailed towards Denmark, but, touching in a port of Friesland, according to the Frankish historians, he there died, without seeing his native land.† The fleet of Hastings, on its return from the Mediterranean, laden with spoils and prisoners, was assailed by a furious tempest. In the extremity of their distress, the Normans were reduced to the necessity of throwing overboard both their plunder and prisoners, in order to lighten their barks. A part of the shattered fleet entered the Rhone, the only river of France which had been hitherto exempt from their incursions. They sailed up its stream, and ravaged the towns and monas- 859.

* Depping, tom. i. pp. 164—168. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 213—216. Geijer, Svea Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 578. Roman de Rou, tom. i. p. 35. Edit. de Pluquet, Note viii. M. Capfigue doubts the Norman accounts of this expedition, (Sur les Invasions des Normands, p. 137) but the fact of the taking of Luna by the Northern adventurers, is expressly stated in the Italian chronicles. Paul Warnefrid. de Gest. Longobard, lib. iv. cap. 47. Muratori, Antiq. Ital. tom. i. p. 25. Rer. Ital. Script. tom. xiii. p. 49.

† Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 224.

teries on both sides. The flourishing cities of Nismes and Arles, where the remains of Roman civilization still lingered, fell victims to their savage fury. All the coasts of the Mediterranean were infested, at this period, by the pirates of the North. They established their winter quarters in Spain, from which they extended their ravages in the Mediterranean quite to the coasts of the Greek empire.

Although the son of Ragnar Lodbrok had abandoned his enterprise in France, the banks of the Seine and the Somme still continued to be laid waste by other adventurers. The feeble government of the degenerate Franks resorted to the wretched expedient of subsidizing one band of Vikingar to drive out the other. For three thousand pounds of pure silver, the adventurers on the Somme stipulated to expel those of the Seine.* To collect this sum, a tax was laid upon the monasteries, the lay proprietors, and the merchants. This contribution was levied with the utmost rigour, by selling the last remaining effects of the miserable inhabitants. Although the collection was enforced by these severe means, it required more than a year to raise this sum, such was the impoverishment of the kingdom, and the diminished numbers of the free inhabitants. In the meantime, the Normans made a predatory excursion into England, but soon returned with an increase of their numbers, under a chieftain, whom the Frankish historians, name Véland. They attacked the rich and famous abbey of Saint Bertin at St. Omers, slaughtered the monks, and heaped up the treasures they had gathered before the great altar. Here the leaders of the Nor-

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 227.

mans soon discovered that a part of the common booty had been stolen by some of their followers. They assembled the whole band at the sound of the trumpet, and inflicted that summary justice upon the delinquents, which might have reminded the Franks of the conduct of their ancestors, under the same circumstances, when Clovis first invaded Gaul. Charles having succeeded in raising the stipulated treasure, to which he added provisions, the Normans condescended to perform their part of the contract. They blockaded their countrymen, who occupied the island of Oisel, in the Seine. During the siege, arrived the band of adventurers from Spain, who joined in the attack. The besieged demanded a capitulation, and offered as the price of their deliverance, to divide with the besiegers the immense booty they had accumulated. Under this arrangement both parties affected to prepare to set sail from the coasts of France, but the commencement of winter afforded them a pretext for still lingering on the banks of the Seine and its tributary streams. A band of the Normans, under Véland and his son Vidric, ascended the Marne, in their light barks, and Charles, by an extraordinary effort of resolution, determined to bar the passage of the river against their return. Finding their passage back to the Seine thus intercepted, the Normans offered to surrender all the booty they had taken since their entry into the Marne, to quit France with their companions, and even to compel all their countrymen to leave the kingdom. They offered hostages for the performance of these conditions, and the monarch of the Franks consented to let them escape. Some days after, Véland had an interview with Charles, and confirmed his promises with an oath. At this interview, he was

persuaded to be baptised, and dismissing his followers, returned to the court of Charles, with his wife and children, where he embraced what was called Christianity in that age, and was afterwards killed in a duel with one of his followers.*

863. His conversion was followed by that of Hastings. This was an object of the highest interest to the people, who had been so long terrified and distressed by his incursions. The king of the Franks deliberated with his prelates and barons how to rid himself and the kingdom of so troublesome an enemy. His vassals offered to furnish the needful supplies of men and money, of sergeants, archers, and infantry, if he were disposed once more to try the fortune of war; but the monarch shrunk from this alternative, and the deliberations of the council resulted in a determination to send the abbot of St Denis and several bishops to implore peace from the Norman chieftain. He was persuaded by means of supplications, promises, and presents, to consent to their offers. The haughty Vikingr suffered himself to be led before the king, and consented to the ceremony of Christian baptism, upon the payment of a considerable sum of money, and according to the chroniclers of Normandy, the gift of the county of Chartres, which was conferred upon him for life.†

Thirty years had now elapsed, since France had suffered all the calamities incident to continual invasion and ravages by the Northern adventurers. There now only remained of their numerous bands a small remnant in

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français, tom. iii. pp. 137, 140, 172.

† This pretended gift of the county of Chartres to Hastings is treated as a groundless imposture, by the best modern French antiquaries. Roman de Rou, tom. i. p. 65. Ed. Pluquet, Note 2.

the fortified station, in the mouth of the Loire. The abbot and monks of St Germain-de-Prés, who, on the approach of the Normans, had fled to Nogent, returned to Paris with the relics of their patron. They were met by the clergy and burghers of the capital, on the banks of the Seine, where is now situate the quay of the Garden of Plants. The sacred relics were brought on shore, and a solemn mass was chaunted: the procession then moved towards the abbey, whilst the clergy sung these words of the prophet Jeremiah: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!"*

* Depping, tom. i. pp. 169—186.

CHAPTER IX.

First attempts to convert the North to Christianity. — Missionaries, Ebbo and Halitgar. — Conversion and baptism of Harald Klak. — His intercourse with Louis-le-Debonnaire. — Character and first mission of Ancharius, the apostle of the North.—His first visit to Sweden.—Obstacles to the progress of the new religion.—Papal bull erecting archiepiscopal See of Hamburg.—Sack of that city by the Danes, and flight of Ancharius.—His second mission to Sweden.—Death and canonization of Ancharius.

THE elements of civilization were scattered among the people of the North in the eighth and ninth centuries, by their constant intercourse with the East, and with the South-western nations of Europe. This intercourse was maintained both by war and conquest. Even the piratical expeditions, though marked by such circumstances of horror for the nations against whom they were directed, ultimately contributed to the civilization and improvement of the North. The bloody and exterminating war carried on for a period of more than thirty years by Charlemagne against the Saxons, who defended, with obstinate valour, their national freedom and ancient religion, was a principal means of bringing into contact the more and the less civilized people of Europe. The Danes, both from religious sympathy and dread of the impending power of the Franks, were closely united with their Saxon neighbours, on the banks

of the Elbe. They too were zealous worshippers of Odin and Thor, and the other gods of the North. Wittikind, their patriot hero, had married a Danish princess, and in the most desperate state of his fortunes had found a refuge in Jutland, beyond the reach of his mighty conqueror. But Charles was more anxious to establish a firm and permanent barrier for the northern frontier of his vast dominions, which extended from the Elbe to the Ebro, than to subdue the savage tribes beyond the former. He conquered, in order to civilize, and his empire was already more than sufficient to require all his vigilance to defend its extensive frontiers against the barbarous nations, by whom it was on every side surrounded. Ragnar Lodbrok, who, from the throne of Lethra, swayed the united realms of the Danes and the Sviar, led the warlike youth of the North, in the train of his distant expeditions to the borders of Sweden and the coasts of England. His name even seems to have been unknown to the Franks, though it afterwards became their terror in the person of another prince. His son, Sigurd Snogöje, king of Jutland, took up arms against them in the latter part of the eighth century. Peace was afterwards concluded between him and Charles, and Sigurd extended his sway over all Jutland, Scania, Halland, and a part of Norway. Sigurd fell in battle, and was succeeded in 803.
Jutland by his brother, Gudröd, called by the Franks, Godfrid, who, as guardian of the young Harde-Knud, became regent of all Denmark.* In the peace which 812-813.
Charlemagne subsequently concluded with Hemming, son of Sigurd, and nephew of Gudröd, that politic con-

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, vol. ii. p 1—2.

queror did not attempt to impose Christianity upon the Danes, which would have been rejected by them as a badge of slavery. He accordingly restrained the excessive zeal of St Ludger, a Frisic missionary, who offered to preach the faith to the pagan Danes; not that he was insensible to the importance of this means of reclaiming them from their wild and barbarous habits, but, either fearing for the safety of the apostolic missionary, or from motives of policy, not wishing to irritate the bordering nations, by opposing their obstinate attachment to idolatry. The fulfilment of his wishes and views in this particular was reserved for his son and successor, Louis le Debonnaire.*

Many of the Danes and Norwegians, whom the pursuits of piracy and commerce carried into foreign lands, became about this period converts to Christianity. Among these were some of the Vikingar who roved the western seas in pursuit of adventures and plunder, and of the Væringjar who served in the body-guard of the Greek emperors at Constantinople. In the year 750, Torkild Adelfar, the friend of Gorm, a petty king of Jutland, who had been sent by him to Biarmaland or some other sequestered region of the remote North, to consult the oracle of the *Utgarde-Loke*, and to whom the secrets of the dread abode of departed spirits had been revealed, on his return voyage landed on the Frisic coast, and was there persuaded by the Christian missionaries to be baptised.† His conversion was probably attended with the less difficulty, as he already belonged to a heathen sect

* Depping, Histoire des Normands, tom. i. p. 103. Münter, Kirchengeschichte von Dännamark und Norwegen, tom. i. p. 230.

† Saxo Grammaticus, lib. viii. p. 160. Suhm's Critisk Historie, tom. iii. p. 536.

which adhered to the gods or demons, enemies of the Æsir. Another of these early converts of the heroic age was the famous *Holger Danske*, or Ogier the Dane, who plays so important a part in the romantic history and other fictions of the middle ages, and who was one of the warriors of Charlemagne. Under that prince's son and successor, Louis le Debonnaire, a Saxon by birth, named Ebbo, who had become archbishop of Rheims, determined to carry the light of the gospel into the benighted regions of the North, and sought the sanction of the papal see for his perilous enterprise. For this purpose he made a journey to Rome, and obtained a bull from pope Paschal I, authorizing him to convert and teach the heathen nations in that part of the world, and directing him "in all cases of doubt to have recourse to the holy, catholic, apostolic church of Rome, the pure source and uncorrupted fountain of truth," commanding all the faithful to aid him in the sacred work, proffering the joys of Paradise as their reward, and denouncing the pains of excommunication against all who might rashly oppose the execution of his commission. Armed with this high authority, and protected by the sanction of the 822.
Imperial name, Ebbo set forth on his mission, accompanied with his associate the monk Halitgar. They arrived safely at the court of Harald Klak, at Heidabæ or Hadeby, in the present duchy of Sleswick, close to the town now called Sleswick, and obtained permission from that prince to preach freely to his subjects the new religion. Harald had been more than once driven out from his dominions by his rivals the sons of Gudröd. The second time he was thus expelled, he was accompanied by his queen, his sons, and a numerous retinue of sub- 826.
jects in a fleet of a hundred barks, with which he sailed

up the Rhine, to visit the emperor at his castle of Ingleheim. Here he was persuaded by the solicitations of Louis and his prelates to renounce the errors of Paganism, and was solemnly baptised with his wife and children. Many of his people who accompanied him followed the example of their prince, and renounced "the works and words of the Devil, of Thor, and Woden, and Saxonodin, with all the evil spirits their confederates."* After the ceremony, Harald proceeded in his white garments to the imperial palace, and received himself from the emperor, his wife from the empress, and his sons from Lothaire the son of Louis, rich baptismal presents, of mantles, jewels, and armour, whilst his followers were rewarded with gifts of clothes and arms after the fashion of the Franks. The day was ended with a magnificent festival, in which every means were lavished to impress the Danish converts with a lively idea of the pomp and splendour of the Romish religion, and the wealth and power of the Franks.† Harald returned to his kingdom, but was again expelled by his people, indignant at his change of religion, and submission to the emperor as his liege-lord. Louis assigned to the Danish prince

* The form of this abjuration was as follows: Q. Forsachista Diabolac? R. Ec forsacho Diabolae.—Q. End allum Diabolgelde? R. End ec forsacho allum Diabolgelde.—Q. End allum Diaboles Wercum? R. End ec forsacho allum Diaboles Wercum end Wordum: Thunaer ende Woden end Saxnote; ende allum them Unholdum, the hira Genotas sint.

† A narative of such particulars of this transaction as struck a monastic mind as worthy of record, is given in the barbarous Latin chronicle in verse of Ermoldus Nigellus, entitled *Carmen Elegiacum de Rebis Gestis Ludovici Pii Aug.* lib. iv. It is printed in the great collection of the Scriptores Rerum Danicarum, by Langebeck, tom. i. p. 399.

by way of indemnity, a territory between the Rhine and Moselle, and afterwards gave him other possessions in the country of Oldenburgh, with a seignory in some part of Nordalbingia. But all these favours did not prevent Rurick, one of Harald's sons, from again becoming a sea-rover, and even Harald himself was suspected of secretly conniving at the incursions of the Northern pagans into Frisia, which country he was appointed to guard. An anecdote told by a monkish chronicler of the time proves how little sincerity accompanied those pretended conversions, which were so dearly purchased by the Franks. On one occasion so many Normans presented themselves to be baptized, that there was not time to prepare a sufficient number of white robes, such as were worn by the neophytes. They were consequently obliged to use such coarse garments as could be found on the emergency. A Norman chieftain, who presented himself to receive the holy rite, exclaimed as they offered him such a dress, "This is the twentieth time I have been baptised, and I have always received a fine white robe: such a sack is more fit for a base hind, than for a warrior like me; and were I not ashamed of my nakedness, I would cast it at your feet, and at the feet of your Christ!" Indeed, according to the notions of that age, a conversion to Christianity did not always necessarily imply a renunciation of the Pagan deities, or if this renunciation was formally made, it was with some mental reservation which satisfied the nowise scrupulous consciences of these converts. As Christ was believed to be the national god of the Franks and the Anglo-Saxons, so Thor and Odin were revered as the tutelary deities of the North. The Scandinavian adventurers who had been initiated in the Christian faith in France, in England,

and at Constantinople, did not scruple on returning to their native land to sacrifice to the national deities. Their lawless and predatory habits, their wild and barbarous character, were but too little influenced by the precepts of the Gospel, obscured as these precepts were by the darkness of the age, and also contrasted with the ferocious and unprincipled conduct of those nations by whom Christianity was then professed. But Louis le Debonnaire congratulated himself on the result of his efforts, and it was probably on this occasion that he caused to be struck a denarius, with a cross and his name and imperial title on one side, and a church with the legend XRISTIANA RELIGIO on the other.*

827. On the return of Harald to the North, after his conversion, the emperor determined to send missionaries to continue the good work commenced by Ebbo. In the council which was assembled to deliberate on this important subject, Louis called upon the ecclesiastics to point out an individual who would be willing, freely and for the love of Christ, to undertake this toilsome and perilous mission. Walo, abbot of Corvey and cousin of the late emperor Charlemagne, stood forth and declared that he knew in his cloister a young monk whose spirit had long been fed with holy dreams, celestial visions, and aspirations after the crown of martyrdom, whose learning and morals were equal to the great work which his burning zeal for the true religion induced him to undertake. Ancharius was immediately sent for, and informed by his abbot of what had passed in the council. He accepted with joy and humility the proposition which was made to him, and being conducted into the presence

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, pp. 236—265.

of Louis, was asked by the emperor if he was willing to go with Harald and preach the word of God to the heathen Danes. Ancharius confirmed by his reply the resolution he had first expressed, but the abbot was so anxious to impress upon his mind that he was not called upon to undertake this work as a duty enjoined by his superior, that he again solemnly conjured him to declare whether he freely undertook it for the love of God and of souls, and again received the same reply from the youthful enthusiast. Another monk of the same convent, named Aubert, volunteered to accompany Ancharius, and they set forth on their voyage, to the amazement of all their brethren, that they should be willing thus to abandon their friends, and country, and home, to peril their lives in a cause deemed so utterly hopeless as that of converting to the true faith, a wild and barbarous people, the inveterate foes of the Christians and Franks. The abbot even declared that he could not allow them to take a servant with them, as none was willing, and none should be constrained, to participate in the hardships and dangers of their holy enterprise.*

On their arrival in South Jutland, they commenced their holy labours, under the patronage and protection of Harald. They purchased some heathen children, who were probably captives taken in war, and founded a school for their instruction in the elementary principles of Christianity. But the civil war between Harald and the sons of Gudröd still raged with barbarous fury, and was fomented by the pontiff-chieftains, who foresaw the destruction of their power and influence in the success of a Christian prince, the ally and vassal of the detested

* Rimberti, S. Ancharii Vita, apud Langebek, Script. Rer. Danic. tom. i. p. 436, et seq.

828. Franks. Harald having been finally defeated in a great battle near Flensburg, was again compelled to fly, and retired to the fief with which Louis had invested him in Nordalbingia. The Christian missionaries followed his retreat, and abandoned their converts to the vengeance of the heathen faction.*

In the mean time the way was opened for the spread of Christianity in the farthest North, by the arrival at the imperial court of ambassadors from Sweden, requesting that missionaries might be sent into that country. Ancharius and another monk offered to accompany the ambassadors, on their return to their own country by
830. the way of Denmark. They joined a caravan of merchants who were going to the fair in Sweden, and under this protection set out for the court of Birca or Sigtuna, where reigned at that time Björn II, a descendant of Ragnar Lodbrok. On their passage across the Baltic sea, they were intercepted by pirates, and though they made a brave resistance, were plundered of nearly all their effects, among which were forty volumes of sacred books. After escaping these perils, they arrived at Birca, where they were received in the kindest manner by the king. Ancharius remained here for a period of nearly half a year, during which he converted and baptised many of the Sviar, among whom were some of the highest rank.† On his return, he brought a letter to the emperor, written with the king's own hand in Runic characters.‡ All the languages of the Northern nations at that period bore a strong affinity to each other, and

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, tom. i. pp. 266. 278.

† Rembert. Vita Anchar. cap. ix.

‡ Langebeck, Script. Rer. Danic. tom. i. p. 448. Note f.

this circumstance facilitated the labours of the Christian missionaries.

The zeal of Louis was rekindled by the success of this mission to a people so remote and so little known as the Swedes, and he determined to establish an archbishopric at Hamburg, from which as a common centre the spiritual concerns of the North might be superintended, and his views of policy in converting the heathen more completely fulfilled. With this view, Ancharius was raised 823.
to the newly created see, and received the confirmation of pope Gregory IV, in a bull declaring him the papal legate in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and (according to some authorities) the Faroe isles, Greenland and Iceland. But Greenland was not at that period discovered, nor Iceland peopled; and therefore it is probable that the names of those countries were interpolated into the papal bull when it was afterwards found convenient to grasp those remote regions within the same spiritual jurisdiction. From this border-post, Ancharius watched the feeble glimmerings of the light he had borne into the sequestered countries of the North. He founded schools for the education of young missionaries, and laboured with unremitted efforts to kindle in others the same fervid zeal with which his own breast was consumed. If the Christianity he sought to propagate was grossly corrupted from the simplicity of the apostolic age, it was the misfortune of the dark and barbarous times in which he lived. But the obstacles he encountered, great as they were, would have been still greater, and, perhaps, insurmountable, had the transition been from the superstition of the Jötnar or the Æsir, to the pure and simple religion taught by Jesus of Nazareth. The splendour of the Catholic

worship filled with amazement the minds of a rude and ignorant people, and gratified their love of pomp and shew, which had been formed by the practice of religious rites of Asiatic origin, and in some degree partaking of Asiatic magnificence. The Pagan idols were easily exchanged for the images of the Catholic saints. A supposed analogy was found between the Trinity of the Christians and the three principal deities worshipped by the Northern nations, Odin, Thor, and Freyer. The cross of Christ was compared to the mallet of Thor; in Loki they found Satan plainly typified; and the white Alfer were, to them, the Angels of Light. Ancharius and his fellow-labourers carried on their design with prudence as well as zeal. They sought to gain the favor of the kings and the Jarls, in order to reach, through them, the inferior orders of the people; and, above all, they addressed themselves to that sex, to whose gentle natures the benignant genius of Christianity has always pleaded most powerfully. Still they were obliged to insist upon the observance of Sunday as a day of sacred rest; the abolition of the practice of polygamy, with the necessary consequence of rendering illegitimate the offspring already born in that species of wedlock, and, what was not the least grievous to a poor and barbarous people, so destitute of the means of subsistence, the discontinuance of the practice of eating horse-flesh. All these innovations upon their established habits and customs, rendered the yoke of the new religion almost insupportable. The wild, lawless, and adventurous youth of Scandinavia could ill brook the exchange of the savage and sensual joys of Valhall, with its combats, drinking horns, and beautiful houris, in the society of their heroic forefathers, for the heaven of the Franks,

inhabited by monks and warriors, the enemies of their ancient faith and national freedom. The great majority of the people of the North still adhered to the religion of their ancestors, and the influence of the priests pro- 845.
duced a reaction in Sweden. Some of the Christian missionaries were murdered in a popular commotion,—others were compelled to fly from persecution. In the same year, a fleet of Vikingar, commanded in person by Erik I, king of Jutland and Fionia, sailed up the Elbe, plundered and burnt Hamburg. Ancharius saw his church, with his cloister and library of books, the precious gift of the emperor, laid in ashes, and was compelled to save his life by flight. He retired with the holy relics to an asylum in the neighbourhood of Hamburg, there established anew his seminary of missionaries, and was afterwards sent by the emperor as 850.
ambassador to Erik, who had became, by the death of Harde-Knud I, king of all Denmark. During this mission, he acquired the favor of the king to such a degree, as to be allowed freely to propagate the new religion among his people.*

Ancharius sent some of his Danish converts as mis- 852-853.
sionaries into Sweden, and soon afterwards made his second visit to that country, where he was graciously received by king Olaf, and remained two years, labouring with his accustomed zeal. But one of the partizans of the ancient superstition feigned a mission from the Gods, pretending that he was authorized to declare their will to king and nation. This messenger announced to the trembling people, how the deities had long favored them with their protection, under which they had en-

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, tom. i. pp. 278—306.

joyed peace and plenty, and had shewn their thankfulness and obedience by frequent offerings and vows. "But now" (said this pretended envoy of the deities), "the smoke of sacrifice seldom rises, the accustomed offerings and solemn feasts are neglected, and, what is more, and worst of all, ye have set another God above us in your hearts. Repent ye now, and render to us your accustomed vows, if ye would secure our favor for the future: go not after strange gods, but if ye desire more gods, we will admit your deceased king, Erik, into our celestial company." The popular attachment to the faith of their fathers was rekindled by this awful appeal to their superstitious fears. The apotheosis of Erik was gratefully accepted by them, temples were raised to his honour, vows and sacrifices offered in his name, as one of the national deities. The friends of Ancharius were now alarmed for his safety, and the apostolic missionary threw himself on the protection of the king, whose favor he had won by splendid presents and flattering communications from the emperor. Olaf protested his willingness to tolerate and even to favor the new religion, at the same time declaring that the question depended, not on his pleasure, but on the will of the people. The popular assembly being consulted, tried the matter in discussion by lot, according to their favorite usage, and chance determined the question in favor of toleration. The people then concluded that Christ was a God as powerful as their ancient Gods, and permitted the new faith to be freely preached and embraced by those who preferred it to the ancient. This popular convention was the Diet of the Gothic kingdom — *Ting allra Göta*, and the decree was afterwards confirmed in the national assembly of the proper Sviar at Upsala. Ancharius availed him-

self of the toleration thus granted, to continue his labours, and afterwards sent other missionaries to forward the same object. But the seeds of the faith appear to have been sown on stony ground, for the ecclesiastical writers assert, that long after the death of Ancharius, not a single Christian priest, and hardly any trace of the new religion, was to be found in all Sweden.*

On his return to Denmark from his second Swedish mission, Ancharius found his friend, Erik I, no longer living. That monarch was succeeded by his son, Erik II, under whom the nobility, who governed in his name, stirred up the people against the Christians, by representing the new religion as the moving cause of all the calamities that fell upon the land. Their aversion to it was increased by their hatred of the Franks and other southern nations, by whom it was professed. Christ was considered as the god of their enemies; Odin and Thor, Freyer, and the other Æsir, as the protecting deities of the great Northern family, who were bound together by the ties of a common origin, language, and religion. But owing to some cause, not precisely explained, the current of opinion soon turned in favour of the new religion. Ancharius was once more invited to visit Jutland, where he was received with open arms by the king, and pursued his great work of converting the heathen with success. 854.

Ancharius spent the remainder of his life in this and other labours of charity. He founded cloisters, schools, and hospitals; visited, with indefatigable industry, every part of his immense diocese; and when at last reluctantly compelled to decline its active duties, devoted him-

* Rembert. S. Anchar. Vita, lib. xx—xxix.

self to those practices of self-mortification, which, in that age, were considered so meritorious. St Martin of Tours was his pattern of the saintly character. He constantly wore the monastic habit of his order, and a hair shirt. His rule of life was the rule of St Benedict, and never did he avail himself of the privilege of his ecclesiastical dignity to claim an exemption from its utmost rigours. In his episcopal visitations, he constantly waited on the poor, at table, before he took his own frugal repast, and often retired from the world with a few select companions, to his solitary retreat, in the convent of Ramslo. Even the love of fame, that 'last infirmity of noble minds,' and which in his ardent breast was naturally strong, was anxiously suppressed and made subordinate to higher and purer motives of action. He
865. died in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and was afterwards canonized by the papal authority. His memory was honored by the institution of festivals; magnificent shrines were built for the adoration of the new saint; and churches and cloisters dedicated to perpetuate his holy name. Ancharius continued to be worshipped, as the tutelary saint of the Northern nations, until the period of the Reformation, and still merits their reverence and gratitude as their deliverer from a bloody and barbarous superstition, and a benefactor who opened to them the career of civilization.*

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, tom. i. pp. 232, 234, 278, 310, 321.

CHAPTER X.

Expedition of the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok to England.—Defeat and death of king Ella.—Conquest of Northumbria.—Death of Edmund, king of East-Anglia.—Conquest of that kingdom.—Wars of Alfred, king of the West-Saxons, with the Northmen.—Peace between Alfred and Godrun, by which the Danes are permanently confirmed in the possession of East-Anglia.—Invasion of England by Hastings the Younger.—Desperate contest between him and Alfred.—Final expulsion of Hastings from the island.

WHILST Ancharius and his successors were carrying into the benighted regions of the North the mild and peaceful light of the Gospel, the Vikingar were scattering the flames of destruction along the coasts of Europe and its isles, from the Baltic straits to those of Gibraltar. 866-867.
To avenge the fate of Ragnar Lodbrok, an expedition, headed by eight kings and twenty Jarls, and composed of all the various nations and tribes of Scandinavia, was directed against England.* Among these chieftains were the sons, or according to other authorities, the grandsons of king Ragnar.† Their names, as given in the Northern Sagas and in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, are somewhat different: but making due allowances for the poetical and romantic colouring given to their cha-

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 263.
† Müller, Saxo og Snorres Kilder, p. 365.

racters and conduct by the Northern Skalds and Sagamen, the identity of the persons, and their actions is manifest, whatever chronological difficulties may attend their eventful story.

According to the Sagas, the sons of Ragnar were waging war in the kingdoms of the South (Sudr-ríki), when their royal father was slain, in Northumbria. After their return to Denmark, they received the first news of his tragical death, from the messengers of Ella, sent to propitiate their hostility. The messengers of the Anglo-Saxon king found them feasting in their hall. They entered, and approached the seat of Ivar. Sigurdr Snakes-eye (Snogöje) played at chess with Huitserk the Brave; whilst Björn Ironside polished the handle of his spear in the middle pavement of the hall. The messengers saluted Ivar with due reverence, and told him they were sent by king Ella, to announce the death of their royal father. As they began to unfold their tale, Sigurdr and Huitserk dropped their game, carefully weighing what was said. Björn stood in the midst of the hall, leaning on his spear: but Ivar diligently enquired by what means, and by what kind of death, his father had perished: which the messengers related, from his first arrival in England, till his death. When, in the course of their narrative, they came to the words of the dying king, 'how the young whelps would roar, if they knew their father's fate,' Björn grasped the handle of his spear so fast, that the prints of his fingers remained; and when the tale was done, dashed the spear in pieces. Huitserk pressed the chess-board so hard with his hands, that they bled. Sigurdr was so wrapt in attention that he cut himself to the bone, with a knife, with which he was paring his nails. Ivar, above all, anxiously enquir-

ing, changed colour continually, now red, now black, now pale, whilst he struggled to suppress his kindling wrath.

Huitserk the Brave, who first broke silence, proposed to begin their revenge by the death of the messengers: which Ivar forbid, commanding them to go in peace, wherever they would, and if they wanted anything they should be supplied.

Their mission being fulfilled, the delegates passing through the hall, went down to their ships; and the wind being favorable, returned safely to their king. Ella hearing from them how his message had been received by the princes, said that he foresaw that of all the brothers, Ivar, or none was to be feared.*

The Northern Sagas and the Anglo-Saxon chronicles agree in the rest of the story, except that the latter make the Northmen land in East-Anglia, before they proceed to attack Northumbria, and the former represent that Ivar professed friendship for king Ella, and afterwards treacherously betrayed him to his brothers. Having wintered in East-Anglia, they sailed in the 867.
spring to attack king Ella, who had usurped the throne of Deira from Osbert. The two rivals made peace with each other, and united their forces against the common enemy. The battle took place at York, and the Anglo-Saxons were entirely routed. The sons of Ragnar inflicted a cruel and savage retaliation on Ella for his barbarous treatment of their father. According to a strange and cruel custom of the savage Vikingar, they ordered the form of an eagle to be cut on Ella's back;

* Thorkelin, Fragments of English and Irish History, pp. 11—25.

the sides to be separated from the back bone; and the lungs to be drawn out through the aperture.*

'A strange and savage faith
Of mightiest power! it fram'd the unfeeling soul
Stern to inflict and stubborn to endure,
That laughed in death. When round the poison'd breast
Of Ragnar clung the viper brood, and trail'd
Their coiling length along his festering wounds;
He, fearless in his faith, the death-song pour'd,
And lived in his past fame; for sure he hoped
Amid the spirits of the mighty dead,
Soon to enjoy the fight. And when his sons
Avenged their father's fate, and like the wings
Of some huge eagle spread the severed ribs
Of Ella in the shield-roof'd hall, they thought
One day from Ella's skull to quaff the mead,
Their valour's guerdon.'†

After this battle, Northumbria appears no more as a Saxon kingdom, and Ivar was made king over that part of England which his ancestors had possessed, or into which they had made repeated incursions.

868. The Northmen, having thus permanently established themselves in this part of England, next year passed the Humber into Mercia, where they wintered. The king of Mercia appealed to the West Saxons for assistance, and Ethelred, with the young prince Alfred, then in his twentieth year, joined him to repel the invaders

* 2 Langebek, Script. Rer. Dan. 279. Turner's Hist. Anglo-Saxons, vol. ii. p. 123. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 263—266.

† Southey. This image of the skull is, however, merely founded on a misunderstood passage in Ragnar's Death Song—the 25th strophe—where 'the carved branches of the head' are spoken of, meaning the crooked horns of animals, used as drinking vessels.

The Danes confided their defence to the strong walls of Nottingham, which the Anglo-Saxons were incapable of breaking through; and a truce was finally concluded between them, by the terms of which, the former retired to York, and the kings of Wessex to their own territory. By this wretched, temporizing policy, the savage invaders were still permitted to retain a foothold in the island, equally dangerous to all the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.*

The next year but one, they embarked on the Humber, and landed in Lincolnshire. Here they burnt the monasteries, massacred the monks, and plundered and laid waste the country on every side. The king of the country took no measures for its defence, but a band of patriot Saxons, under the brave Earl Algar, assembled, and attacked the advanced guard of the Northmen. Three of their kings were slain in this combat, but they soon received a reinforcement, whilst the ranks of the Saxons were thinned by desertion. The small band remaining, contracted themselves into the form of a wedge, and presented an impenetrable bulwark of shields against the Northern archers, whilst they repelled the attacks of the horse with their spears. So long as they prudently maintained this order of battle they were invincible, but, as evening advanced, the Northmen pretended to fly, and the Saxons rushed to the pursuit. Suddenly the Pagans rallied, and, rushing upon their scattered forces, surrounded them on every side. Their leaders, whose skill and valour had

* Turner, vol. ii. p. 126. Lingard's Hist. of England, vol. i. p. 225. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 273.

been lost by the rashness of their countrymen, made a desperate resistance, and were all left dead on the field. The Northmen pursued their victory to the neighbouring monastery of Croyland, massacred the abbot and his brethren, and committed the edifice to the flames. They marched the next day to Peterborough, and destroyed its splendid monastery, and the library of books, which had been two centuries in collecting.*

870. The torrent of invasion turned next towards East Anglia. The throne of this kingdom was then occupied by Edmund, more celebrated for his mild and passive virtues than for those active qualities which the times demanded. The story of his tragic fate is best told in the little book of Abbo, which he addresses to Dunstan, from whom he received the particulars he relates. He intimates that Dunstan used to repeat them with eyes moist with tears, and had learnt them from an old soldier of Edmund, who simply and faithfully recounted them upon his oath to the illustrious Athelstane.†

Inguar, according to the national chronicles, a son of Ragnar Lodbrok, but, according to the Northern Sagas, son of Ivar, and grandson of Ragnar, advanced with a small band to take, by surprise, Edmund, who had retreated to a small village in Suffolk. His army had already been defeated under one of his earls, and he had taken no precautions for the further defence of his dominions. Inguar advanced rapidly upon the unfortunate prince, who was made an unresisting prisoner, bound with

* Turner, vol. ii. pp. 129—142. Lingard, vol. i. p. 226. Suhm' Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 283—286.

† Acta Sanctorum, tom. vii. pp. 465—472. Ed. Cologn. 1575.

fetters, scourged, and tortured, before the cruel mercy of Inguar released him from his misery by decapitation.*

A different narrative of the tragic death of St Edmund, is given by Matthew of Westminster, in his abridgment of the Saxon chronicles. According to this legend, there lived, at this time, in Denmark, a man of kingly birth, named *Lothbroc*, who was driven out to sea in a violent storm, as he was hawking on the coast in a small boat. After beating about for some days, he was at length stranded on the English coast, at Redham, in Norfolkshire. Here Lothbroc was kindly received by king Edmund, to whom he told the story of his accident, in the Danish tongue, which, says the monk, very nearly resembles the English. His manly beauty and skill in hunting, recommended him to the favor of Edmund, and, at the same time, excited the envy of Beorn, the royal huntsman, by whom he was decoyed into a wood and murdered. The sagacity of Lothbroc's faithful hound, who would not quit his master's body, discovered the murderer, who was condemned to be set adrift at sea in the same boat which had brought the Danish chieftain to England. Beorn was driven upon the coast of Denmark, where he fell into the hands of Lothbroc's sons, to whom he accused king Edmund as being the instigator of their father's murder. Hingvar and Hubba swore by their 'allmighty deities' to avenge their father's death. They afterwards invaded East Anglia, and slew king Edmund in the manner already mentioned.†

The incidents of this story, romantic and improbable as they are, serve to indicate the existence of various

* Turner, vol. ii. pp. 144—146. † Flores Histor. p. 314.

concurrent traditions, all pointing to the historical fact of the invasion of England by the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok, in order to avenge their father's death.

Godrun, one of the Northern chieftains, assumed the vacant throne of East Anglia, whilst Inguar returned to his brother Hubba in Northumbria. In the same year, according to the annals of Ulster, Ivar, king of all the Northmen, went from Scotland to Dublin, with two hundred ships, carrying with him an immense booty, and a multitude of British, English, and Pictish captives. In 872, he died. According to the Sagas, he ordered the lofty mound, in which his body was to be buried, to be erected facing the sea-shore, at the place where the invaders usually landed, as an impregnable rampart against their attacks. The children of Ivar, sea-kings like himself, are often mentioned in the subsequent Irish annals.*

The rest of the invaders of England, under the command of Halfdan, another of the numerous progeny either of the poetic or the historical Ragnar Lodbrok, marched to attack the kingdom of the West Saxons. Ethelwulf, the earl of Berkshire, defeated them at a village near Reading, where Sidroc the elder, who had committed so many devastations in France, was slain. Ethelred and Alfred, joint kings of Wessex, joined their forces to those of Ethelwulf, and attacked the Northmen at Reading; but the battle ended in the death of the Earl, and the precipitate retreat of the West Saxons. Four days afterwards they collected a more formidable array, and again encountered the enemy at Ashdown, or Ashenden, where the Northmen were signally defeated after a

* Johnstone, p. 65. Thorkelin, p. 29.

long and desperate struggle, in which they lost the younger Sidroc and many Jarls. Alfred distinguished himself in this battle. In another, fought soon afterwards, Ethelred received a mortal wound.*

Alfred now wielded the undivided sceptre of the West-Saxons, and the commencement of his reign was unfortunately signalized by the conquest of Mercia by the Northmen. Burhred, its king, had marched westward to oppose the Kymri, or native Britons, whom the lapse of four centuries under the Saxon dominion, had not yet entirely subdued. On his return, he found his eastern frontier attacked by a more formidable enemy, and hastened to purchase a precarious peace by the sacrifice of treasure and honour. In 874, the Northmen again left East-Anglia and entered Mercia, where they wintered, and destroyed the celebrated monastery of Repton, in Derbyshire, the burying place of the Mercian monarchs. Burhred soon afterwards abdicated the throne, and leaving his unprotected people to the mercy of the invader, retired to Rome, where he died in the English college, a building erected for the reception of the Anglo-Saxon pilgrims or travellers. Thus ended the dynasty of Mercian kings, and the whole of England was now divided between the native Britons, who still lingered in the fastnesses of Wales and Cornwall, the West Saxons under Alfred, and the Northmen who had devastated and subdued the rest of the island.† 872.

The genius and courage of Alfred was now tasked to repel the further progress of the invaders. With the 876.

* Turner, vol. ii. pp. 152—157. Lingard, vol. i. pp. 229, 230. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 291.

† Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 307.

diminished resources of his kingdom, he could resort to no better means than to purchase a temporary truce with money. The Barbarians pledged their faith by the bracelets consecrated to Odin, the oath most sacred in their estimation, and which they had never before plighted. But Alfred exacted also an oath on Christian reliques, and they showed how little they regarded the solemnity of either, by making, soon after, a treacherous
877. night attack upon his camp. The king now turned his attention to more worthy and more effectual means of repelling their attacks. He caused long ships and gallies to be built, and as his own countrymen were unskilled in the art of navigation, manned them with sea-rovers, such as he could engage in his service, of all nations. They appear to have served him with fidelity, and materially contributed to the defence of the sea coasts.*

878. The conduct of Alfred in thus repeatedly purchasing peace from the invaders, as well as his want of energy in repelling them at this period, has been much censured by the national historians. He was soon afterwards compelled to preserve his life by flight and concealment, whilst his kingdom was left an easy prey to the invading foe. The monkish chroniclers of the day attribute his misfortunes to his sins, and some of his own churchmen reproached him with his want of attention to the complaints and sufferings of his people, which negligence could only be expiated by alms and penitential tears. Even his friend and biographer, Asser, reluctantly confesses that his misfortunes were 'not unmerited,' but more rationally states, that his neglect of the duties of government was visited by the natural consequence of

* Turner, vol. ii. pp. 158—168. Lingard, vol. i. p. 241.

the disaffection and almost contempt of his subjects. However this may be, the fact is certain, that he was obliged to quit his residence in the disguise of a common Saxon warrior, and to wander about in the woods and marshes of Somersetshire, where he at last found shelter in the hovel of a swine-herd. Here he gave himself out as one of the king's attendants, who had fled from the enemy's pursuit, and sought concealment. The peasant received, and occasionally employed the disguised monarch in the menial offices of his household. Here is laid the scene of the well-known anecdote of Alfred and the swine-herd's wife,* and it was here that he meditated in silence and solitude upon the means of retrieving his own and his country's misfortunes. An auspicious incident at this period served to nerve his courage and rekindle his hopes.

A brother of the Northern chieftains Inguar and Halfdan, generally supposed to be Ubba, was returning with his fleet from an incursion into South Wales, and sailing by the castle of Kynwith, in Devonshire, which had become the refuge of a small remnant of West Saxons, determined to blockade this almost impregnable fortress, and thus compel by famine its little garrison to

* The swine-herd's wife, in the absence of her husband, desired their guest to watch the loaves, or cakes, which she had placed to bake on the hearth. But the king was so engrossed with his cares and misfortunes, as to neglect the charge. The bread was burnt, and the negligence of Alfred was severely chastised by the tongue of the woman. The king used to delight in telling this story in the circle of his friends, after his restoration, and the incident was sung in Latin verse.

Urere quos cernes panis, gyrare moraris,
Cum nimium gaudes hos manducare calentes.

Lingard, vol. i. p. 245.

surrender. Odun, the Saxon commander, saw no other escape left but in a night sally, which he effected, and rushing with desperate valour over the trenches, penetrated to the tent of Ubba, who was slain, with the greater part of his band. The Saxons obtained an immense booty, among which was the famous magical standard of the *Reafan*, the loss of which was a fatal presage to the Northmen. This banner, adorned by the figure of a raven, is said to have been woven by Hubba's sisters, the daughters of Ragnar, in one noon tide. It was believed that the bird appeared as if flying when the Danes were to conquer, but was motionless when they were threatened with defeat.*

Encouraged by this incident, Alfred began to prepare for resuming the offensive. For this purpose, he fortified the fenny isle into which he had retreated, where a small band of his friends, with his wife and children, had joined him. From thence he sallied forth, harassing the invaders with reiterated attacks. He thus prepared the way for the deliverance of his country, by inuring his small but faithful band of followers to this kind of irregular warfare, whilst they gained their subsistence by hunting, fishing, and plundering the enemy. Here he spent his leisure in storing his mind with knowledge, such as was rarely acquired by kings, or even by clerks, in that age; and here too he divided, with such touching simplicity, his remaining loaf with the poor mendicant at his door.†

The king having formed a plan for surprising the

* Turner, vol. ii. pp. 189—196. Lingard, vol. i. p. 247. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 328, 329.

† In this place, Mr Turner informs us, was found an amulet of gold, to hang round the neck, with the inscription: "Ælfred meg heht gewyrcan," *Alfred ordered me to be made.*

principal army of the Northmen in Wiltshire, resolved to visit their camp in disguise. For this purpose he assumed the garb of a harper. His taste for music and poetry fitted him to play this part with success, and we are told, that he gained by this means access to the tents of the Danes, and even to the table of their kings, learnt their secret counsels, and narrowly observed the exposed situation of their encampment. The trenches and ditches of the Danish camp are still to be seen on the summit of the steep hill that rises above Eddendun, or Edrington. The Danes, weary of this confinement, had spread themselves to the village, and over the neighbouring plain. It is probable that Alfred had notice of this descent, and determined to examine their position in person. On his return to the isle of Athelney, he despatched messengers to the surrounding counties, announcing to his subjects that he still lived, and desiring them to meet him in warlike array, to the east of Selwood forest. Having collected a sufficient number to justify the enterprise, Alfred marched with his countrymen against the enemy, strewed the plain with their slaughtered hosts, and drove all who escaped into their entrenchments. Here they were blockaded, and in a few days were compelled by famine, to solicit the mercy of the conqueror. This victory was commemorated, in some later period, by a very curious monument, the statue of a gigantic horse, cut out of the chalk bank, which still exists, on the south west side of the hill, near Edrington.*

In consequence of this victory, the Danish king, Godrun, made a perpetual truce with Alfred, which he confirmed, not with the usual solemnities of oaths and

* Turner, pp. 196—204. Suhm, H. af D. tom. ii. p. 329.

pledges, but by a real or affected change of religion. He consented to be baptized, with twelve of his Jarls; Alfred was his godfather, and he received the name of Ethelstane. He remained twelve days with Alfred, as the guest of the king, and on his departure, received magnificent presents, with a grant of the whole of East-Anglia, which he divided among his followers. They turned their swords into plough-shares, colonized, and cultivated the country which was confirmed to them by a solemn treaty. The boundary of the Danish kingdom was established from the mouth of the Thames, the river Lea to its source, thence to Bedford and along the Ouse to the ancient Roman road, called Watling street.* It thus included the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, and part of Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Huntingdonshire. The two kings engaged to promote Christianity, and to punish apostacy. The Saxons and Danes were to live in friendship and peace; there was to be the same estimation of persons for both nations, and the mulct for the slaughter of an individual of either was to be the same, according to the rank of the person. A thane of the king being questioned for homicide was to be tried by twelve of his peers, and others by eleven of their peers, and one of the king's *men*.†

This policy of Alfred, in thus blending together the two nations, if not wholly, was at least, partially justified by the event, and was probably the wisest he could adopt in such difficult circumstances. The Danish

* Wilkin, Leg. Anglo-Saxon. 47.

† Turner, vol. ii. pp. 206—212. The territory ceded to Godrun, together with Northumbria, became known by the name of *Danelagh*, or 'Dane-law.' Palgrave, vol. i. p. 132.

colony, under Godrun, at first refused to join their predatory countrymen, and Alfred, who had recovered all the country south of the Thames, was now enabled to turn his attention to the equipment of a naval armament sufficient to check the incursions of the Vikingar. Fifteen years had elapsed from the time of his restoration, when he was attacked by a Sea-King, named Hastings, whom Mr Turner takes to be the same chieftain who had distinguished himself by his ravages in France and the south of Europe, in company with the sons of Ragnar Lodbrok. But he was, in fact, a son of the Hastings who had ravaged France, who was afterwards converted to Christianity, and was living quietly in Neustria at the time of its invasion by the Normans, under Rollo.*

The Hastings now in question attacked Alfred under peculiar advantages. He was sure of the neutrality, at least, of his countrymen in Northumbria and East Anglia, so that he had only to wrestle with the strength of the West Saxons and Mercians. But the Northmen settled in England were far from observing that neutrality which the king had a right to expect from them, and he required all his genius and all the attachment of his countrymen to extricate himself from this perilous situation. Hastings collected a great fleet in the port of Boulogne, and dividing his force, entered the mouth of the Thames with a division under his own command, whilst another effected a landing on the south-west coast of Kent. Alfred took a position where he could separate the two divisions of the Northmen, and, at the same time, keep them from contact with their countrymen

* Suhm, H. af D. tom. ii. p. 332. Dudon de Saint-Quentin, tom. ii. p. 76. Roman de Rou, tom. i. p. 62. Ed. de Pluquet.

established in East Anglia. He thus intended to carry on a Fabian warfare, and to wear out the patience of the restless invaders by delay. But the established conditions of military service among the Saxons rendered it impossible to retain their entire forces in the field for a long time together. The king therefore divided his army into two equal parts, one half of which was retained in service, whilst the other was allowed to return home and pursue their ordinary occupations. Every Saxon, of the military age, thus alternately performed his tour of duty, and Alfred was enabled constantly to present to the enemy an undiminished force of disciplined soldiers. Wearied of this protracted and inactive warfare, Hastings suddenly retreated to his ships, whilst his principal band broke loose from their confinement, and pushed for the Thames, intending to ford it and pass into Essex, where they might join their countrymen. Alfred pursued and reached them at Farnham, in Surrey, where they were defeated with great slaughter, and those who could swim, plunged into the Thames to escape the Saxon sword. Alfred followed them through Middlesex into Essex, and drove them across the Coln, into the isle of Mersey, where he besieged them with a new levy of Saxons, the term of service of the other having expired.

In the meantime the Danish colonists of Northumbria and East Anglia equipped two fleets to assist Hastings in his attempt to conquer the kingdom of Wessex. A hundred of their barks passed through the straits of Dover, and sailed along the southern coasts, whilst another division of forty sail navigated round the north of the Island. Alfred was, therefore, obliged to fly to the defence of the western coast. Hastings had escaped

from the Thames, and reached a secure position near the Canvay isle, in Essex. But in his retreat, his wife and children were taken by the Saxons. Alfred caused the boys to be baptized, and generously restored them to their father. But the stern heart of Hastings was unmoved by this act of magnanimity, and he still continued his depredations from the strong hold he had seized in Essex. In one of these incursions he marched to plunder on the frontiers of Mercia. During his absence, the Saxons, who had been left to continue the siege of Mersey, proceeded through London, and were joined by the warlike citizens. They attacked the position of Hastings during his absence, forced his entrenchments, burnt some of his ships, and carried off to London a great spoil, with the women and children of the invaders. Alfred once more restored to Hastings his wife and children, whom he sent back loaded with rich presents, but with as little effect as before. The Sea-King was determined to gain a permanent establishment in England, or perish in the attempt.

On the return of Alfred from Devonshire, where he had repelled the invading foe, he found Hastings had collected the wrecks of his defeated army, and erected a strong fortress at South Shobery, near the south-eastern point of Essex. Here he recruited his forces with reinforcements of his countrymen from the north of England, and from the Vikingar, who were roving in the neighbouring seas. With these he sailed up the Thames, and afterwards marched by land to the Severn, on the banks of which they entrenched themselves. Here they were besieged by the Saxons, and after suffering every variety of misery, at last escaped back to their naval station in Essex with great loss. Still their

895.

love of adventure and plunder, with the hope of finding a home elsewhere than on the waves, drove them to the desperate resolution of making a new incursion into the heart of England. They confided their families, ships, and booty to their friends and countrymen in East Anglia, and marched rapidly across the country, until they reached and fortified Chester. Here Hastings was besieged by Alfred, but at last broke away from his confinement, pushed into North Wales, and after plundering the country, returned by a circuitous route, through Northumbria and East Anglia to his original position at Mersey in Essex. Having dragged his barks from the Thames up the Lea, he built a fortress for their protection on the latter stream, twenty miles from London, near Hartford or Ware. Here Alfred blockaded them, and obstructed the navigation of the river so as to render the vessels useless. Finding that they had thus lost their barks, the Northmen again sent their wives and children to East Anglia, and suddenly breaking up their encampment, fled through the heart of the kingdom from the Lea to the Severn, and entrenched themselves at Bridgnorth. Here they remained undisturbed the whole winter, but the citizens of London seized and carried off, or destroyed their vessels on the Lea.

896. Hastings had now contended for three years against Alfred, but at last indignantly yielded to the superior genius and fortune of his illustrious enemy. He disbanded his despairing followers, some of whom retired to the Danish colonies in Northumbria and East Anglia; others crossed the seas in search of new adventures.

897. Those who had retreated to the north of England, soon after fitted out a naval expedition against the coasts of

Wessex. To encounter them with advantage, Alfred caused ships to be built larger than theirs, and of a construction superior to the vessels, both of the Danes and the Frisians, who excelled all other nations in naval architecture. With these means, he at last succeeded, though not without some disasters, in ridding himself of the remnant of the Vikingar, who had so long harassed his people.*

Hastings soon after left England, but his subsequent life and adventures are covered with a thick veil of oblivion. Had he encountered a foe inferior in resources of mind to Alfred he might perhaps have anticipated the fortune of that Norman, whose invasion of England was afterwards crowned with success. The fame of his exploits was appealed to by William the Conqueror, to kindle the valour of his troops before the battle, which proved so fatal to the Saxon name and nation: but the wild and savage glory of Hastings fades before that of Alfred,—the light of his age,—the morning star of civilization.

* Turner, vol. ii. pp. 211—242. Lingard, vol. i. pp. 262—269. Palgrave's History of England, vol. i. pp. 137—141.

CHAPTER XI.

Reign of Harald Hárfager in Norway.—Battle of Hafursfjord.—His intercourse with king Athelstane.—Endeavours to extirpate piracy.—Battle of Brunaburgh.—Anglo-Saxon lay.—Egill's Saga.—Norman invasions of France continued.—Siege of Paris.

ALFRED was succeeded in the throne of the West Saxons by his son, Edward the Elder. His pretensions were questioned by Ethelwald, one of the children of Alfred's elder brother Ethelbald, who refused to submit to the decision of the Vitena-gemót, fled to the Northumbrian Danes, and excited their sympathy to that degree, that
905. they are said to have elected him their king at York. He afterwards became a Sea-King, and, joining his forces to the East Anglian Danes, ravaged Mercia. He was at last slain in battle with the men of Kent, and his death became the means of effecting a peace between the Anglo-Saxons and the Anglo-Danes. But the in-
910. extinguishable hatred between the two nations soon broke out into fresh hostilities. They ravaged alternately each other's territories, until the Northmen were at last surprised by Edward and defeated, with the slaughter of many thousands. In this battle fell many Jarls, with Halfdan and Eowills, two brothers of the famous Inguar.
918. Edward protected his dominions against the incursions of

the Anglo-Danes, by a chain of fortifications drawn across the island, and the Northmen were defeated in an attempt to invade by sea. The Anglo-Saxon monarchy 920.
received new strength and security from the re-union of Mercia to Wessex, which was effected on the death of Ethelfleda, the daughter of Alfred. The East-Anglian and Northumbrian Danes ultimately submitted to his paramount authority, and were contented to enjoy in peace and tranquillity the territories they had acquired and colonized in England.*

The revolution which had been effected in Norway in the latter part of the ninth century, by Harald Hárfager, had an important influence on the spirit of maritime enterprize. Previously to the reign of that monarch, Norway, like all the other countries of Scandinavia, was divided into a great number of independent districts or tribes, each of which was governed by its petty chieftain, Jarl, or king. Each had also its own separate popular assembly, or *Thing*, and furnished a certain number of barks and men for any maritime expedition undertaken by all the tribes in common, or for the general defence of the country. Harald was descended from the ancient race of the Ynglings in Sweden, and the foundations of his ascendancy over the other petty kings of Norway, were laid by his father, Halfdan, king of Westfold. Harald subdued them all successively, and reduced under his dominion the whole country from Finnmark to the Naze of Norway. The last effort made by the enemies of Harald to oppose the progress

* Turner, vol. iii. pp. 1—18. Lingard, vol. i. pp. 272—278. Palgrave, vol. i. pp. 195—199.

of his ascendancy, was the result of a general confederacy among all the independent Norwegian chieftains. The contest was terminated in favor of Harald by a naval battle at Hafursfjord, a bay of Norway, now called Stavengerfjord. This sea-fight is celebrated in the Northern Sagas and songs as decisive of the fate of Norway. Both parties were aided by numerous bands of Bersœrker and Vikingar, of heroic champions and piratical sea-rovers, who swarmed in the seas of the North, and crowded, on this eventful occasion, to either standard, as they were stimulated by revenge, or the love of adventure, and the hope of reward. The struggle was maintained with obstinate fury on both sides, until Harald, whose lofty ship, with its dragon's beak, bearing his royal banner, was stationed in the centre of his fleet, sent against the enemy his select corps of body guards and champions. Two of the confederated kings perished in the fight; the rest fled, and finally submitted to the victorious Harald, or were driven into exile.*

Snorre quotes, on this occasion, the historical lay composed on this battle by one of Harald's Icelandic Skalds, named Thornbiörn Hornkloft.

'Loud in Harfur's echoing bay,
Heard ye the din of battle bray,
'Twixt Kiötve rich, and Harald bold?
Eastward sail the ships of war;
The graven bucklers gleam afar,
And dragon's heads adorn the prows of gold.

* Snorre, Haralds Saga ens Hárfagra, cap. xix. Schœning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. ii. p. 91.

Glittering shields of purest white,
And swords, and Celtic falchions bright,
And Western chiefs the vessels bring:*
Loudly roar the wolfish rout,†
And maddening Champions‡ wildly shout,
And long and loud the twisted hauberks ring.

Firm in fight they proudly vie
With Him whose might will make them fly,
Of Eastmen kings the warlike head.‖
Forth his gallant fleet he drew,
Soon as the hope of battle grew,
But many a buckler brake ere Haklang bled.§

Fled the lusty Kiotve then
Before the Fair-haired king of Men,
And bade the islands shield his flight.
Warriors wounded in the fray,
Beneath the thwarts all gasping lay,
Where head-long cast they mourn'd the loss of light.

Gall'd by many a massive stone
(Their golden shields behind them thrown),

* Spears from the West, *i. e.* from Britain and Ireland. Swords from Valland, *i. e.* from France.

† *Ulhédnar*—warriors clothed in wolf-skins.

‡ Bersæker.

‖ Harald, "the monarch of the Eastmen who dwelt in Utstein," is the literal import of the original. The Icelanders called the Norwegians Eastmen (Austmanna), as they were also called by the people of Britain and Ireland.

§ Harald laid his ship alongside that of Haklángr, the son of Kiotve, one of the most distinguished confederates, and his defeat decided the fortune of the day.

Homeward the grieving warriors speed;
Swift from Hafur's bay they hie;
East-mountaineers o'er Jardar fly,
And thirst for goblets of the sparkling mead.*

The conquests of Harald gave occasion, as we have already seen, to the settlement of Iceland, the Orkneys, Shetland, and the Faröer isles, where the indignant kings and Jarls, who could not brook his sway, and the Vikingar, who would not submit to his restraints upon their piratical habits, sought a refuge beyond the reach of his powerful arm. The latter still continued their customary sea-roving, and plundered on every coast and island in the Northern ocean. The indefatigable Harald pursued them to their lurking places in these insular retreats. He subdued all these islands, except Iceland, and extended his dominion to the Isle of Mann, where a Norman dynasty had been long established. Harald set over all the countries he had thus conquered, his own Jarls, with something like a feudal dependence on himself as their superior lord. Though a Barbarian, Harald was not a mere savage adventurer: he had the loftiest spirit of the heroic age, and even aspired to civilize and legislate. His own personal interest, combined with motives of policy, induced him to adopt measures for the entire suppression of private war, of marauding expeditions by land, and of piracy on the seas. These were the great obstacles to civilization and improvement, and, at the same time, the principal means of keeping alive the spirit of insubordination and resistance to his au-

* The editor has made some alterations in the above translation by the Hon. W. Herbert, to accommodate it more nearly to the sense of the original Icelandic.

thority, as the sovereign of the compact monarchy he was resolved to establish.*

It has been supposed that the conduct of Harald in these particulars, was, in some degree, influenced by the example of Athelstane, who had succeeded Edward the Elder as king of the Anglo-Saxons. According to the English historians, an intercourse of friendship and courtesy was commenced between them at an early 931.
period. Athelstane had visited Norway in his youth. Harald sent his son Hakon to be educated at the court of Athelstane. The king of the Northmen sent, at the same time, to the king of the Anglo-Saxons, a present of a magnificent ship, with a golden beak and purple sails, surrounded with shields gilt on the inside. Athelstane gave to Hakon, in return, a sword with a golden hilt, and a blade of wonderful temper, which Hakon kept to the day of his death. The young prince was baptized into the Christian faith, and his conversion afterwards gave occasion to the planting of the first seeds of Christianity in Norway.†

The account which Snorre gives of this intercourse between the two kings, is somewhat different. According to him, they were not friendly presents and marks of regard that Athelstane and Harald exchanged with each other, but rather tokens of defiance, intended to shew the receiver's inferiority. He tells of Athelstane sending messengers to the king of Norway with the present of a sword, and when one of them handed Harald the sword, he turned the hilt towards him, and when the king took it in this manner, the messenger exclaimed: "Thou

* Snorre, Haralds Saga ens Hárfagra, cap. vi. xx. xxi.

† Turner, vol. iii. p. 87.

hast taken the sword as my monarch wished, for he that takes the sword of another by the hilt becomes his liege man." Harald dissembled his anger at this insult, and the following summer sent Hakon, the son of one of his slave concubines, under the care of his officer, to England. The officer set the child on the knee of Athelstane, and said, "Harald commands you to nourish his illegitimate child," which was intended as a retaliation for the insult offered him by Athelstane, "for," says Snorre, "according to the common opinion, he who educated another man's child is inferior to him in dignity." The first movement of Athelstane was to slay the child, but he listened to more worthy suggestions, and educated the son of Harald, who had been thus strangely introduced to him, in the Christian faith, and afterwards distinguished him by many marks of his favor.*

After all, the simple account given by the old Norwegian chronicler Thiodrek, seems more probable, that Hakon was sent by his father Harald to Athelstane, king of the English, to be nourished and taught the manners of the nation.†

Harald had many wives, and a numerous progeny of children. Previous to his death, he gave the principal portion of his dominions to his son Erik, and smaller portions to his other children. But the tyranny of Erik, which was aggravated by the horrid crime of fratricide, roused the people of Norway to shake off his yoke. They reposed their hopes of relief in the young prince Hakon, who sailed from England with an armament provided by his foster-father Athelstane. His fleet was driven by a

* Snorre, Haralds Saga ens Hárfagra, cap. xli—xliii.

† Theodoricus, De Reg. Vetust. Norvagic. cap. ii. p. 7.

storm towards the southern coasts of Norway, where he landed, and the people, having expelled his tyrant brother, called him, by their free voices, to the vacant throne.*

Previous to this event, Athelstane had subdued the Danish kingdom established in Northumbria, and re-united it to his monarchy. The successor of Ivar fled 934.
into Scotland, where he was received by Constantine, then king of the Scots. Athelstane pursued the fugitive, and ravaged the borders and coasts of Scotland. A general confederacy was now formed against the Anglo-Saxon monarch, at the head of which was Olaf, the prince who claimed the throne of Deira, and who was descended, in the maternal line, from Ragnar Lodbrok. Although he is represented, in the Anglo-Saxon annals, under the name of *Onlauf*, as a fugitive prince, he appears to have been a king of the Œstmen, or Ostman dynasty in Ireland. He was joined by some of the princes of Wales, of the original British race of Kymri, and by the Danish settlers in Northumbria and East-Anglia. Against this formidable league, swelled by the addition of the Vikingar and other Northern adventurers, Athelstane was compelled to battle for his crown. He prepared to resist the attacks of the confederates, and for this purpose, enlisted in his service Thorolf and Egill, the two Icelandic heroes, with whom the reader has already been made acquainted. The contest was decided in a place in Northumbria called Brunaburgh, 938.
the exact position of which is uncertain. The circumstances of the fight are fully detailed in the old songs composed by the Anglo-Saxons to celebrate their victory,

* Snorre, Saga Hakonar Goda, cap. i.—iii.

and are also described in the Icelandic Sagas, in the peculiar style of those compositions. By combining together the principal incidents collected from both these sources, and comparing them with other original narratives, the learned historian of the Anglo-Saxons has presented to his readers a highly interesting and picturesque account of this eventful battle.*

All the various nations of the North, Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, Scots, Picts, and Irish, were mixed in the deadly fray, and satiated their hereditary hate in each other's blood. The lay composed as a memorial of this battle, and inserted in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, celebrates the glorious achievements of

'Athelstane the King
lord of Earls,
of Barons, bracelet-giver
and his brother eke
Edmund Ætheling †
of ancient race,
with swords they fought,
near Brunaburh.'

It tells how the children of Edward clove with their swords the wooden bucklers of the foe, and how

'The field was drenched
with warriors' blood,

* Turner, vol. iii. pp. 23—34. See also Palgrave's History of England, vol. i. pp. 207—211. Langbeck, Script. Rer. Danic. tom. ii. p. 421. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 589. Geijer, Svea-Rikes Häfder, tom. i. p. 570. Note (4).

† Prince—'the son of the Æthel or noble:' a title appropriate to the members of the reigning family, who derived their descent from Woden. "Voden, de cujus stirpe multarum provinciarum regium originem duxit." *Beda Ven.* l. i. cap. 15.

from the uprising of the Sun,
till the mighty planet,
bright candle of God,
of the eternal Lord,
till the noble creature
sank to her evening seat.'

It praises the valour of "the West Saxon earls and the Mercians, who slew five young kings, seven Jarls, with countless numbers of the Scots and sea-rovers, and put to flight Anlaf, leader of the Northmen, and Constantine, the wise old king, who, leaving his son on the field of slaughter, mangled with wounds, had no occasion to boast of that day's fight any more than Anlaf:" and concludes with telling how

'The Northmen departed
in their gore-stained ships
over the deep sea,
back to Ireland,
Dublin to seek,
with shame in their hearts;
whilst the brothers,
King and prince,
sought in triumph
their country,
the West-Saxon land,
leaving the mangled corses
of their foes
to glut the foul birds of prey,
the black raven,
the grey eagle,
the greedy war-hawk,
and the wolf on the wold.
Nor was there ever
a greater slaughter,
on this island
never fell

a multitude so great
by the edge of the sword,
since, as old historians
tell us in books,
the Angles and Saxons
came hither
over the broad seas,
the illustrious warriors
overcame the Welsh,*
and the bold Earls
obtained the land.'†

The Saga of Egill dwells, of course, with more complacency upon the heroic valour and achievements of that adventurer, and his brother Thorolf, who was slain in the fight, and whose death was promptly revenged by Egill upon the British prince Adels.‡ But whatever discrepancies may exist in the different stories of this famous fight, there is no diversity in the accounts given by the historians of the time of its important consequences. It raised Athelstane to a level with the first sovereigns of the age, and greatly increased the power and influence of the Anglo-Saxon state. In fact, Athelstane may properly be considered as the real founder of the English monarchy, as it existed before the conquest, Egbert having not any claim to that distinction, and Alfred having reigned over the Anglo-Saxon nation

* Wealas.

† Warton's Hist. of Engl. Poetry, vol. i. Price's Ed. Dissert. i. p. xl. Note. The literal translation of Mr Price has been retained, with little variation, in the above extracts, as being adapted to give an accurate idea of this curious monument of our early language and literature.

‡ Egills-Saga, pp. 269—299. Havniæ, Sumpt. Legati Arna-Magnæani, 1809.

in possession of a part of the territory, not over the realm of England in its present extent. Athelstane, by subduing the Danish kingdoms of Northumbria and East Anglia, the existence of which Alfred was reluctantly compelled to tolerate, became the actual monarch of all England, subject only to those restraints which were imposed by the laws and customs, and still more, by the free spirit of the people over whom he ruled.*

Olaf was more fortunate in his competition with 941.
Edmund the Elder, the brother and successor of Athelstane. The king of the Northmen once more equipped an expedition, with which he sailed from Ireland, and landed in Northumbria, where he was elected king by the mixed population of that province. He marched from York, and defeated Edmund, first at Tamworth, and afterwards at Leicester. A peace was then concluded between them, through the agency of the archbishops of York and Canterbury, by which Edmund surrendered to the Northmen all that part of England situate to the north of the Roman road called Watling street, reserving to himself the Southern counties only, with the condition, that whoever of the two monarchs survived, should be king of all England. Olaf died in the follow- 942.
ing year, and Edmund embraced the opportunity of

* Turner, vol. iii. pp. 35—38. Lingard, vol. i. p. 291. Mr Palgrave, however, insists that the Anglo-Saxon states never became thoroughly incorporated into one kingdom, previous to the Norman conquest. Before that event they rather constituted a feudal confederacy, or bundle of states, which, though occasionally united under one king, or 'basileus,' did not form a compact monarchy, according to our modern ideas, since it was necessary that his authority should be separately recognized in each, and since each possessed its own distinct customs and laws. Vol. i. pp. 229, 230.

recovering Northumbria, from which he expelled the Northmen and repeopled the country with Saxons.*

During nearly the whole of this period the Northern adventurers continued their accustomed ravages on the
864. coasts and rivers of France. After the truce concluded with them in 863, Charles le Chauve assembled a diet or plaid at Pistes on the Seine, to deliberate on the measures necessary for the future defence of the kingdom against the Normans. These invaders had constantly received aid and succour from the great vassals of the crown, who were in open or secret hostility with Charles. His brother Pepin II, king of Acquitaine, was shut up in a monastery, from which he escaped, and joined the Barbarians in that kingdom. Having been taken prisoner, he was condemned to death for adhering to the Pagan enemies of the kingdom, which punishment was again commuted into imprisonment for life in a convent. The diet resolved that all private fortresses should be abolished, and regular fortifications constructed to guard the line of the Seine against the Normans. It denounced the penalties of high treason against those who should furnish them with horses and arms.†

Ethelbald, king of the West Saxons, had married his father's widow, Judith, the daughter of Charles le Chauve, and on the decease of her second husband, she retired to her father's court in France. Here her beauty, which had not yet lost the charms of youth, won the heart of Baldwin, Count of Flanders,—surnamed the

* Turner, vol. iii. pp. 106—109. Palgrave, vol. i. pp. 221—223.

† Depping, Histoire des Normands, tom. i. pp. 187, 188. Capfigue, sur les Invasions des Normands, pp. 140—144. Sismondi, Histoire des Français, tom. iii. pp. 164—170.

Arm-of-Iron. The princess, who had already incurred the resentment of her father by her conduct in England, yielded to the solicitations of the Count, consented to be secretly married, and fled with him in disguise. The angry father pursued them with his vengeance, to which the church added the more dreadful terrors of excommunication. The offending pair retired to Rome, where they found means to interest the feelings of the pope in their favour. Nicholas interceded with Charles for their pardon, suggesting that Baldwin, if driven to despair, might make common cause with the Normans, and thus endanger the safety of the kingdom. The king at last consented to forgive the offenders, their marriage was celebrated anew, and Charles invested Baldwin with the county of Flanders, with an augmented territory. It now included the whole line of coast from the Scheldt to the Somme, and the country from the Sambre to the sea. Flanders was thus severed from the monarchy of the Franks; but so long as he of the Iron-Arm lived and reigned, that great and rich fief was preserved from the incursions of the Northern barbarians.*

The Normans encountered but little opposition from the inert resistance of the princes of the Carlovingian line who followed Charles le Chauve. Their incursions on the Loire and the Seine were marked with the usual circumstances of destructive horror, unredeemed by a single trait of patriotic valour, except that of Robert-le-Fort, a chieftain of Saxon descent, who had been created Count of Anjou, and entrusted with the defence of the country between the Seine and the Loire. This patriotic hero exterminated a band of the pirates, and sent their

* Depping, tom. i. pp. 189—191. Turner, tom. ii. pp. 91—94.

866. standards and arms to the king of the degenerate Franks. He was at last surprised near Angers, and slain by the Norman archers, with his fellow warrior, Ranulph, Duke of Acquitaine.*

868. The great expedition against England to avenge the death of Ragnar Lodbrok saved France for a time from any general attack. But the Normans still continued their ravages along the coasts and the banks of the rivers. After the peace made by Alfred with the Northmen of East-Anglia, those adventurers who were unwilling to renounce predatory habits, set sail for the continent, and the cessation of the ravages in England was marked by new incursions into France. Louis III and Carloman, the grand children of Charles le Chauve, had divided between them the remains of the once powerful monarchy of the Franks. They united their arms against Boson, who had usurped the throne of Burgundy; but whilst they were engaged in this expedition, Louis hearing of the devastations committed by the Normans in Picardy, which were encouraged by a disaffected baron of that country, left Carloman to pursue the war in the South, whilst he marched against the bar-

881. barians in the North. Louis encountered them at Surdcourt, near Abbeville. Here he obtained over them a signal victory, which has been recorded by some monkish poet of the time in a lay, written in the old Teutonic dialect, which was the language of the Franks, before they adopted the Romanz, or *langue d'ouil.*†

* Depping, tom. i. p. 192. Sismondi, tom. iii. p. 175.

† Yet the Neustrian subjects of Louis. III spoke the Romanz tongue, or the *langue d'oui*, and M. Sismondi concludes that this song was intended to spread in Saxony the fame of Louis, when he afterwards laid claim to the inheritance of his cousin Louis,

The author paints in the darkest colours the degeneracy, treachery, and impiety, which had provoked the divine wrath, and brought upon the kingdom every sort of calamity. This historical song commences with relating how God, wishing to try Louis by adversity, permitted the Pagans to ravage his kingdom and oppress his people.* Afterwards, the Lord seeing their sufferings, took compassion upon the Franks, and called upon Louis to become their deliverer. He accordingly summoned his barons and knights to this crusade. On the eve of battle, Louis caused a sacred hymn to be chaunted, to which all his host responded by the cry: 'Lord have mercy upon us!' — *Kyrie-eleison!* The ancient valour of the Franks, rekindled by religious enthusiasm, was worthily seconded by their monarch. But this victory, celebrated in chronicles and songs for ages after it was obtained, does not appear to have been attended with correspondent advantages to the security of the kingdom. The Normans still maintained possession of their strong hold at Ghent, from which they continued their incursions into the north of France.†

On the death of Louis of Germany, they were no longer restrained within those bounds, but advanced into the interior, and laid waste the banks of the Rhine. Mentz, Worms, Cologne, and Aix-la-Chapelle, were laid in ashes. The Normans insulted the memory of

of Saxony, and thus accounts for the song being in the old German or Frankish language. Histoire des Français, tom. iii. p. 246. Note.

* 'Einen Kuning vueiz ih,
Heizet her Ludovuig,' &c.

† Depping, tom. i. pp. 227—238, Suhm. II. af D. tom. ii. pp. 349—351. Sismondi, Histoire des Français, tom. iii. p. 246.

the once dreaded Charlemagne, by converting his palace into a stable; and the flourishing capital of the emperor of the West remained deserted for four-and-twenty years. The new emperor, Charles le Gros, returned from Italy, and held a diet at Worms, to deliberate on the means of repelling the Northern invaders. He marched against them, invested one of their strong holds near Maestricht, where the Norman chieftains, Sigefrid, Godefrid, Gorm, and Halfdan, had shut themselves up with their booty, and the fall of which seemed inevitable, from the immense superiority of the force brought against it. But the emperor was soon weary of blockading a little fortress, in the heats of summer, with his camp in an unhealthy and unfavorable position. The Normans might have thought themselves fortunate to escape with their lives, the walls of the fort having been blown down in a tempest: but they negotiated in their accustomed haughty style, and demanded hostages from the Franks, in order that Sigefrid might visit the Imperial camp in safety. In his interview with Charles, the Norman chieftain promised, upon the payment of a large sum of gold and silver, to retire with all his forces, never again to invade the territories of the emperor, and even engaged to embrace the Catholic religion. This shameful tribute was disguised under the name of a voluntary gift, and, in order to raise the necessary sum, a contribution was levied upon the churches and convents. Godefrid received a donation of the fiefs in Frisia, which had been enjoyed by Rurick. The Normans filled their barks with plunder, and retired to continue the same ravages in France, where their hostility was bought off in the same manner, and a truce of twelve years, purchased by the payment of the

enormous sum of twelve thousand pounds of silver. Soon after the conclusion of this ignominious pacification, Carloman died of an accidental wound received in hunting. There now only remained, of all the descendants of Charlemagne, the infant Charles, afterwards called the Simple: but the calamitous situation of the kingdom demanded a sovereign of mature age, and the Frankish nobility conferred the crown upon Charles le Gros, in the hope of securing his powerful protection. The emperor remained in Germany, where his exclusive attention was required by the ambitious projects of his Norman vassal Godefrid, who had espoused Gisele, the natural daughter of Lothaire II, and sister of Hugues, who claimed his father's dominions as his rightful inheritance. Godefrid and Hugues were accused of having plotted together to partition between them the dominions of Lothaire, and, in order to defeat this scheme, the emperor had recourse to the basest means of treachery. Godefrid was assassinated by order of Charles, at an interview obtained by his ambassadors for the purpose of treating of their differences. Hugues was soon afterwards taken prisoner, had his eyes put out, and was imprisoned in a monastery.* 884.

The Normans, exasperated by the base massacre of their countrymen in Frisia, and encouraged by the defenceless situation of France, abandoned by the emperor, and distracted by the division of the great vassals, determined to penetrate into the heart of the kingdom. For this purpose, Sigefrid collected the scattered bands 885.

* Depping, tom. i. pp. 247—260. Capfigue, pp. 273—281. Sismondi, tom. iii. p. 258. Suhm, H. af D. tom. ii. pp. 354—361. 377—381.

of his countrymen on the coasts and rivers, with other adventurers from England and Frisia, to the number of 40,000 men, and, with this formidable force, entered the Seine. He ascended the river with 700 barks, encountering no opposition until he reached Paris, opposite to which he arrived on the 25th of November. Our ideas of this chief city of the Franks in the ninth century, must not be taken from the present magnificent capital of the kingdom of France. Paris was then confined to the limits of the isle de la Cité, with the exception of two fauxbourgs, one on the north, and the other on the south bank of the Seine. The rich monasteries of Saint-Germain, Saint-Genevieve, Saint-Martin, and Saint-Laurent, stood in the open fields and meadows, among the scattered cabins of the wretched peasantry. The monks by whom they were tenanted fled with the sacred reliques and their most precious effects to the city, which was fortified by a strong wall, and lofty towers placed at the ends of two bridges, by which the island communicated with the banks of the river, the navigation of which was obstructed below by a larger bridge built for that purpose, where is now the Pont-au-Change. The Normans, finding themselves thus stopped by a fortified town and an unnavigable river, demanded a free passage up the Seine, promising upon this condition to spare the city of Paris.—Count Eudes, a son of the valiant and patriotic Robert-le-Fort, and Gauzelin, bishop of Paris, a churchman distinguished for his courage and patriotism, replied to the arrogant demand of Sigefrid, that the emperor had confided to them this post, which they were determined not only to defend, but to protect the surrounding country against invasion. The next morning, the Normans commenced

their attack against the tower which defended the principal bridge. The Franks sallied forth to repel the attack, and Gauzelin was wounded by a Norman arrow. The battle ceased with the setting sun; the garrison retired within the walls, and the Normans retreated to their barks, dragging after them their dead and wounded. The Christians passed the night in completing the defences of the great tower; the Pagans in preparing their machines for sapping its foundations. The next day they renewed the attack, but with no better success; and were exposed to the satirical reproaches not only of the besieged, but of their own women, who rallied them upon their ineffectual efforts, and inflamed their fury to madness. They endeavoured to demolish the props of the tower with their battle axes, and to set fire to its wooden upper works. The courage and activity of the besieged repelled these attempts, and the enemy, tired of their obstinate resistance, dispersed over the surrounding country, revenging their shame and mortification by laying it waste on every side, with fire and sword.

In the month of January, the Normans commenced a 886.
regular siege with machines constructed with more art and ingenuity than is commonly attributed to this uncivilized race. But the arts of destruction are often preserved and transmitted from age to age, whilst the chain of those useful inventions which contribute to the happiness of mankind is broken by intervening barbarism. Among the great variety of military engines used both in the attack and defence of Paris, there are several, the invention of which can only be attributed to the ancient Romans, and for which the Normans must

have been indebted to their intercourse with the southern nations of Europe. Among these were moving towers, covered with roofs of wood or leather, and filled with armed men; balistæ, which vomited a shower of wooden blocks and darts; and catipultæ, which launched enormous stones and combustible substances. The besieged opposed to these instruments of attack, ignited javelins, huge blocks of wood, boiling water, and melted lead, which they poured upon the heads of the assailants. Baffled in all their attempts, they endeavoured to fill up the ditch of the tower with earth, trees, and the dead bodies of the slain. At last they attempted to set fire to the tower by means of boats filled with combustibles, which they directed with the current of the stream against the piles of the bridge. At sight of this new peril, part of the inhabitants were panic struck, and fled for succour to the relics of St Germain, before which they remained prostrate in silent terror. The rest of the garrison maintained their firmness, and sunk the fire boats by filling them with stones thrown from the walls.

In the mean time, the city was again exposed to the
Feb. 6. danger from which it had just escaped. The river suddenly overflowed its banks, and carried away a part of the smaller bridge, thus leaving detached the tower by which the bridge-head was defended on the side of the main land. The garrison hastened to repair the bridge, and the enemy to attack the little garrison of the tower. This heroic band of only twelve soldiers defended themselves with a valour which merited a better fate. Upon the remaining fragment of the bridge, they resisted the attack of the Pagans during the whole day, and only surrendered when worn out with fatigue. They

were massacred by the merciless barbarians, and their bodies thrown into the river, except one only, who saved his life by swimming.

The inhabitants of Paris were now nearly reduced to utter despair, when their hopes were again revived by the appearance on the neighbouring heights of a corps of imperial troops, under the command of Count Henry of Saxony and Lorraine. The garrison made a sortie, and forming a junction with the auxiliary troops, attacked the entrenched camp of the Normans. This attack was attended with little success, and the imperial troops retired at the end of May, leaving the capital to its fate. In the meantime, famine and disease had thinned the ranks of its defenders, and several military chiefs retired secretly from the devoted city. Among these was a knight who was admonished to return to his post by a dream, in which he saw the celestial host defending the walls and protecting the city of Paris. This vision was accepted as a sure pledge of the divine assistance, and the clergy carried the relics of St Germain in procession round the walls. Sigefrid, wearied with the protracted resistance of the city, offered to raise the siege upon the payment of the small sum of sixty pounds of silver. This proposal was accepted, and he retired with his own band according to his engagement. But he had treated without the consent of the other chieftains, and they refused to abandon the enterprise.

Charles le Gros at last listened to the supplications of his subjects, imploring that protection which it was his sacred duty as a sovereign to have rendered them spontaneously. In the month of July, he sent forward an advanced corps under the command of Count Henry,

who fell into an ambuscade whilst he was reconnoitring the Norman camp, and was slain and stript of his arms before his followers could come up to his assistance. The death of Godefrid was thus avenged upon one of his assassins, and the Normans again assumed the offensive. They suddenly attacked the isle de la Cité on the eastern side, where now stands the cathedral of Notre Dame. This part of the island was defended by a little band of Franks, who sustained the shock of the enemy until the main body of the garrison could come to their assistance. In the mean time, the Normans prepared to attack the town on another side, and the panic struck burghers had again recourse to the sacred relics for protection. The Normans penetrated by the north bridge, scaled the walls, and set fire to the tower which defended the capital on that side. But they were once more repulsed by the intrepidity of the garrison, and compelled to quit the blazing tower.

The main body of the imperial army reached the neighbourhood of Paris, in October; but instead of attacking the enemy and raising the siege, Charles encamped upon the heights of Montmartre. Sigefrid had in the meantime rejoined his countrymen with a reinforcement, and Charles concluded a disgraceful treaty with the Normans, by which he engaged to pay them seven hundred pounds (probably of gold,) with permission to ravage and plunder along the banks of the Seine and the interior of Burgundy. Such was the result of all the efforts and sacrifices made by the inhabitants of Paris during a siege of ten months, in which they were shamefully abandoned by their sovereign, the titular emperor of the West, who, in his turn, was deserted by the great crown vassals, and the kingdom

was thus left to be desolated on every side, by its cruel invaders. A Benedictine monk, to whom posterity is indebted for almost the only account of the siege of Paris by the Normans, written in Latin hexameters in the barbarous taste of the age, preached to the people a sermon, in which, associating their cause with that of the clergy, he represented them both as suffering equally from the injustice and oppression of the great. "Every day," says he, "the monasteries and churches are plundered of their lands and goods by the kings, counts, viscounts, consuls, and pro-consuls, by the royal vassals and delegates, and by wicked judges, who, by every species of artifice and falsehood, by fraud and forgery, undermine those bulwarks of our holy religion, the episcopal sees. Every day, the wretched poor, the victims of these oppressors, fly to the tombs of the saints, imploring protection against their minions and satellites. More detestable are they than Moabites, Amelikites, or even *Normans*, these tyrants, who calling themselves Christians, do not cease to despoil and starve the people of God." Doubtless, the princes and nobility amply deserved the harsh and opprobrious epithets bestowed on them in this severe philippic, but we must, at the same time, remember that the catholic clergy had been endowed by the kings of the Franks, with the fairest possessions of the land, and that the churches and convents had amassed immense wealth, which rendered their spoliation, both by the Normans and by the national princes, an object of indifference even to a superstitious people, who were impoverished and bowed down to the earth by the heavy yoke of this double oppression. Can it then be a subject of surprise that the wretched

remnant of the free population of France should have opposed so feeble a resistance to the incursions of the Northern invaders?*

Soon after the siege of Paris was raised, its patriotic bishop died of the fatigues he had suffered, and was succeeded by Anscheric, a prelate worthy to fill the episcopal see of Gauzelin. The Normans having attempted to pass by the city, in order to ascend the river, and ravage the interior, conformably to the ignominious treaty extorted from the emperor, the newly chosen bishop resisted their passage by water, and they were compelled to drag their boats round by land, in order to reach the upper Seine.† Here they continued their destructive ravages on every side. The peasant fled from his hamlet, and the monk from his convent, to the walled towns, carrying with him the sacred relics. At this period of universal distress and consternation, a new supplication was inserted in the litany, and the people were commanded to pray for deliverance from the fury of the Normans, as the greatest of the multiplied calamities with which they were afflicted.‡ The German subjects of Charles le Gros soon after revolted against him, and the different fragments of his dominions were

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 1—18. Capfigue, pp. 151—168. Sismondi, tom. iii. pp. 262—267. Suhm, H. af D. pp. 384—395.

† See the description of a boat, dug out of the banks of the Seine, near the Champ de Mars, in 1806, (Memoires de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions, an. 1821, tom. v.) and supposed to be a Norman bark. It was a simple canoe, hewn out of a single tree, and capable of containing only eight men with their baggage and provisions.

‡ A furore Normannorum, libera nos, o Domine!

disputed by various descendants of the renowned Charlemagne. The Neustrian Franks now cast their eyes upon the valiant defender of Paris, Count Eudes, son of the patriot hero, Robert-le-Fort, who was believed to be a descendant of Charles Martel, and whom the popular voice proclaimed as worthy to sway his sceptre. He was accordingly declared king of the Franks, at a parliament held at Compiègne, and strengthened his pretensions by his real or affected moderation, in protesting that he considered himself merely as administering the affairs of the kingdom in the character of guardian to the infant Charles, the legitimate heir of the Carlovingian line. But even the energy, which the popular opinion had attributed to the character of the Count of Paris, was insufficient to stem the torrent of invasion which poured in upon the devoted land. He too was obliged to purchase the retreat of the Normans. But the clergy and burghers of Paris again refused to suffer the barbarous foe to pass by the walls of their impregnable city, and the Normans were once more compelled to drag their barks over land, and to launch them into the river below the town, in order to effect their retreat to the sea.

Eudes soon after stained his reputation by an act of perfidy unworthy his heroic bearing. A Danish king or chief, named Osketil, who had commanded a band of his countrymen in the siege of Paris, and to whom Count Eudes had promised an establishment in France, upon condition that he should renounce his piratical habits and embrace the religion of the Franks, was assassinated by a standard bearer, in the suite of the Count, at the very moment he presented himself at the baptismal

font. This sacrilegious murder was not only excused by the king, but the assassin received the castle of Blois, the lord of which had been slain by the Normans, as his reward for delivering the kingdom of an enemy, who, it was alleged, might have become the more dangerous for his pretended conversion.*

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 23 — 35. Suhm, H. af D. tom. ii. pp. 395, 398, 408, 411.

CHAPTER XII.

Origin and early life of Rollo, first duke of Normandy.—The Jarls of Mære.—Prohibition of piracy by Harald Hárfager.—Banishment of Rollo from Norway.—Condition of France under Charles le Simple.—Landing of Rollo at Rouen.—Defeats the Franks, and ravages Neustria.—Negociation between Charles and Rollo.—Cession of Neustria to the Normans.—Baptism of Rollo.—Settlement of Normandy.—Legislation of Rollo.—*Clameur de Haro.*—Trial by battle.—Norman architecture and poetry.—Romantic literature.—Norman historians.—Robert Wace.

SEVERAL of the Northern chieftains had sought, not merely to gratify their wild and restless spirit of adventure and the thirst of plunder, but to form permanent establishments for themselves and their followers in the milder regions of the South. This design was pursued by Rollo alone, with that perseverance which was ultimately crowned with success, and which has intimately connected the name and exploits of this adventurer with the subsequent history of France and England. The Norman chroniclers, who have written the annals of their country in prose and verse, have recorded various fabulous accounts of the origin and early life of the first duke of Normandy, the progenitor of the conqueror of England. But we shall soon see how little these accounts agree with his authentic history as recorded by the Northern writers, who had no motive to flatter the vanity of a powerful line of princes, by

attributing to them an origin more illustrious than the truth would warrant. In the course of his wandering and fugitive life, Rollo had served both for and against king Alfred in England; and as the French historians suppose, that politic prince had assisted him in his first incursion into France, with the view both to rid himself of a troublesome enemy, and to gratify the jealousy which the Anglo-Saxon kings entertained of the Carlovingian line. A remarkable dream which he had in England, and which a Christian had interpreted as a celestial vision, announcing the great things that awaited him in France, determined the Norman chieftain to seek his fortune in that direction. In this dream, Rollo found himself afflicted with leprosy, on a high mountain, from which flowed a living fountain of pure and limpid water. He plunged into the stream and was purified. He perceived also upon the mountain a flock of birds, who bathed in the same fountain, and flew away to make their nests. One of his Christian prisoners, whom he consulted upon the interpretation of this dream, informed him that the leprosy typified Sin, the mountain, the Church, and the fountain of water, that Baptism by which he must be regenerated, after which, he should acquire an establishment in France with his companions in arms, who were figured by the birds. But this prophetic vision, if it ever took place, was not realized until twenty years afterwards, and under circumstances apparently little flattering to his ambition. The other stories related by the Norman annalists, of the connection of Rollo with king Alfred, are contradicted by the silence of the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, and were plainly invented to flatter the vanity of the dukes of Normandy and kings of England, under whose patronage they were

written. All that is certain respecting his first adventures on the coasts of France is, that he appeared at the mouth of the Seine in 876, with six barks, the little squadron of a fugitive sea-rover, but which formed part of a larger fleet of Vikingar.* We have before seen how their hostility was bought off by Charles le Chauve, after which, Rollo again returned to England, where, according to the fabulous accounts of the Norman chroniclers and poets, he assisted Alfred to recover his throne, in return for which, Alfred generously offered him one-half his kingdom, which the Sea-King, with equal generosity, refused.†

We have already stated by what measures Harald Hárfager, after having united all the petty kingdoms of Norway under his sceptre, sought to extirpate piracy in the Northern seas, and to reclaim his people from habits, which, though they nourished the spirit of liberty and independence, were the principal obstacles to the progress of civilization, and to the consolidation of his power. After he had pursued the pirates to their various island retreats to the north of Britain, and had subdued the Orcades, Hebrides, and Mann, he determined to secure these conquests by setting over them a vassal king, on whose fidelity he could rely. For this purpose, he selected Rögnvald, Jarl of Mære, who was descended, in the paternal line, from the ancient Finnish or Jötnish family of the Fornjótr, established from the earliest ages at Drontheim, and descended, in the maternal, from the famous Sigurdr Ring, king of Denmark and Sweden. The Orcades, or Orkneyar, were

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. p. 315.

† Roman du Rou, Edit. of Pluquet, p. 71.

confided to the rule of the Jarl of Mære, who was the father of Rollo, the first duke of Normandy, whilst the government of the Hebrides, or Sudureyar, was conferred upon Ketill Flatnef, a famous Sea-King, descended from one of the ancient and illustrious families of Norway. Ketill equipped a fleet, and drove away the pirates, but, instead of taking possession of the isles in the name of Harald, claimed them as his own independent possession. The offended monarch confiscated the domains of the faithless Jarl in Norway, and his relations fled to Iceland, the general refuge of the discontented and the oppressed. In the mean time, Rögnvald returned to Norway, leaving his brother Sigurd as his substitute in the government of the Orkneys. Sigurd expelled the Christian monks from the islands, and with the aid of Thorstein the Red, a Vikingr from Iceland, conquered a small portion of Scotland, where he built a fortress. Some years afterwards Sigurd died, and the pirates still continued to infest the seas of this Northern archipelago, which determined Rögnvald to invest with this fief his natural son Einar, the child of his slave and concubine, his legitimate son Rollo being, at this time, absent on one of his distant sea-roving expeditions. His choice was justified by the event. Einar drove away the pirates, and re-established law and order in the isles confided to his rule.*

893. In the mean time, the family of the patriarchal monarch was distracted by domestic dissensions. He had conferred upon the eldest of his numerous sons the government of Vigen, with the title of Jarl. The rest

* Schœning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. ii. pp. 119—123. 157, 158. Depping, tom. ii. ch. viii. pp. 53—61.

revolted against this apparent partiality and injustice. Gudröd and Halfdan raised the standard of rebellion, and invaded the domains of the rich and powerful Rögnvald. The Jarl of Mære was slain, and his possessions became the spoil of the rebellious children of Harald. Gudröd seized his possessions in Norway, whilst Halfdan sailed to the west, and took possession of the Orkneys and Shetland. Einar, the son of Rögnvald, was compelled to seek a refuge in Scotland. Exasperated by the undutiful revolt of his children, and by the fate of his faithful Jarl, Harald took up arms against Gudröd, and expelled him from the possessions he had usurped. He conferred the vacant fief of Mære on Thórer, one of the sons of Rögnvald, and gave him his own daughter in marriage, as a mark of his affectionate attachment to his father's memory. But a tragic event which happened at this time in king Harald's own family, turned the tide of his passions in another direction. Einar, son of the Jarl of Mære, who had been driven from his lordship in the Orkneys, and had found a refuge in Scotland, was secretly preparing the means of vengeance, which he soon executed in a signal manner. Having equipped a fleet of barks, he surprised the usurper of his fief, defeated him in a sea-fight, from which Halfdan escaped with his life by swimming. The next day, the unfortunate prince was found naked upon a desert rock. In this wretched condition he was brought before the victor. Einar inflicted a cruel death upon his captive enemy, and, piercing the side of the victim with his own sword, offered his smoking entrails as a sacrifice acceptable to Odin, the god of war and the giver of victory.*

* Schœning, tom. ii. pp. 159—169.

894-895. The tragic fate of Halfdan, as it became known in Norway, aroused the resentment of Harald and his family. The brother of the murdered prince would have immediately equipped an expedition to the isles to chastise the cruel Einar; but Harald reserved this vengeance for his own hand. He fitted out a fleet, and set sail for the west. Einar, who was apprised of the king's design, fled to Caithness in Scotland. Harald pursued him thither, but was persuaded to forego his revenge, and to accept 'the price of blood' in the shape of a tribute of sixty mares of gold, to be paid by the inhabitants of Caithness, who had given aid and succour to Einar. As these poor people were unable to raise this sum, Einar paid it for them, upon condition that they should concede to him certain feudal rights in the country, where, it appears, he had already established some sort of jurisdiction. Thus, by a singular incident, this expedition of Harald, designed to inflict a signal vengeance upon Einar, became the means of confirming and strengthening his dominion.*

Whilst this deadly feud still raged between the families of king Harald and Rögnvald, Jarl of Mære, the latter's son, Rollo, returned from one of his distant sea-roving expeditions, and made himself obnoxious to the resentment of the incensed king of Norway. Like many other of the Scandinavian youth of high birth, he had abandoned his family and home in early life, and roamed the seas in search of subsistence and adventures. Among other practices connected with piracy, Harald had prohibited, under the severest penalties, the *Strandhug*, or impressment of provisions, which the sea-rovers

* Schœning, tom. ii. pp. 169,170.

were in the habit of exercising, by seizing the cattle of the unprotected peasantry. Being taken in the fact, Rollo was, by a solemn sentence, banished for ever from his native land. This event is of such leading importance in the thread of our history, that we shall leave it to be told by the Herodotus of the North, in his concise and simple diction.

"Rögnvald, Jarl of Mære," says the venerable Snorre, "was the intimate friend of king Harald, who held him in the greatest esteem. He had married Hilldur, daughter of Hrolf-Nefio; their sons were Hrolf and Thóre. Rögnvald had also other sons by his concubines, one of them was called Halladr, another Einar, and the third Hrollagur. They were already grown up, whilst his legitimate children were yet in their infancy. Hrolf was a famous Vikingr, and was so stout that no horse could carry him. He was therefore obliged to go on foot, and thence was called Gaungo-Rólfr (Rollo the Walker); he cruized much in the Baltic sea.

"One summer, returning from a cruise, he landed at Vigen, and there exercised the customary right of *Strandhug*. King Harald, who happened to be there at the time, was greatly incensed when he was informed what had taken place, for he had strictly forbidden this practice in his dominions. He caused a *Thing* (Council or Court of Justice) to be assembled, to banish Hrolf from Norway. Hilldur, the mother of Hrolf, as soon as she heard this, went to the king to intercede for Hrolf, but Harald was inflexible. Finding her prayers ineffectual, Hilldur exclaimed, in the words of the Skald:

'You then expel my dearest son, (named after my father!)
The lion whom you exile,
is the bold progeny of a noble race.

Why, o King! are you thus violent?
It will not be good to fight with the Wolf of the Shield:*
nor will he spare the King's flock
if he seeks a refuge in the wood.'

"After this, Hrolf the Walker crossed the western sea, and came to the *Sudar-eyar*, (the Hebrides,) and thence to *Walland*, (France,) where he carried on war, and acquired a great Jarlship, which he planted with Normans, and which was afterwards called Normandy. From this stock came the Jarls of Normandy: his son was William, the father of Richard, who begot another Richard, father of Rollo-long-Sword, whose son was William the Bastard, king of England. From this last, have descended all the other English kings."†

Rollo having collected a band of adventurers, some of them, like himself, fugitives from their native country, landed at Rouen, where the people and clergy, who were deserted by their natural defenders, submitted to him, upon condition, that he should protect them against other bands of his countrymen. Finding the city and neighbouring country desolate and deserted, Rollo and his companions determined to take possession of this fair and fertile land. The internal condition of France was at this time favourable to their views of permanent conquest. The pretensions of Charles the Simple, the legitimate heir to the crown of the Carlovingian line, who had been thrust aside by the usurpation of Eudes, Count of Paris, sanctioned by necessity and the popular voice, were once more revived by a faction of the higher nobility and clergy. The two parties, instead of uniting

* i. e. 'famous warrior.'

† Snorre, Haralds Saga ens Harfagra, cap. xxiv.

to repel the common enemy, sought to make use of him against each other, and secretly intrigued to gain his assistance. Charles had commenced a negotiation for the purpose of making some kind of league with the Normans, when Foulk, archbishop of Rheims, after putting that city in a state of defence against their incursions, addressed to the young king a letter, threatening him with resistance and excommunication, if he did not desist from his project.

"All your friends," says the prelate, in this letter, "are struck with horror at the base idea of your soliciting the friendship of the enemies of God, and calling in the aid of Pagan arms to prostrate the Christian name. To league with Pagans, is to renounce God and return to idolatry. The kings, your ancestors, after having abandoned the errors of Paganism, devoted themselves to the worship of the true God, and from Him they always supplicated aid: thus they reigned happily, and have transmitted their inheritance to their posterity. But you are about to abandon God; yes, with regret I say it, you abandon God when you league with his enemies. What! at the very moment you ought to put an end to such a long train of calamities, give over robbing the poor, and repent of such horrible crimes, you are about to provoke still more the wrath of God, by leaguing with those who hate him, and persist in their barbarous ferocity? Believe me, never by such a course of conduct will your reign prosper. Until this time, I have always had some hope, but now I see you rushing with your partisans the downward road to destruction. Those who give such counsels prove, not that they are faithful, but that they are unfaithful: if you listen to them, you will surely lose both the celestial

and the terrestrial kingdom. In the name of God then, I supplicate you to renounce such a design, and not to plunge into eternal perdition; which would be for me and all those who remain faithful to you a perpetual source of grief. Better would it have been for you never to have been born than to seek to reign with the aid of the demon, and to give aid and succour to those whom it was your duty to have combated by every means in your power. Know that if you persist in your design, and yield to such evil counsels, you must no longer reckon on my fidelity; on the contrary, I will draw off from their allegiance as many of your subjects as I may be able, and excommunicating both you and yours, I will deliver you to eternal condemnation."

898. Whether it was the effect of this menacing epistle, or dread of the thunders of the church, combined with the circumstance of the death of Eudes, his rival, which happened about this time, it is impossible to determine; but Charles the Simple renounced his design of forming an alliance with the Normans. In the meantime they continued their accustomed ravages, and whilst one band invaded Neustria, another was engaged in laying waste the kingdom of Acquitaine with fire and sword, Rollo ascended the river Seine to Pont-de-l'Arche, and Charles the Simple, now become the undisputed monarch of the Franks, resolved to encounter the Norman chief with a strong force. The elder Hastings, who had become the vassal of the king, was to join the royal army with his array. The united corps encamped on the Eure, and Ragnold, duke of France and Orleans, by whom it was commanded, took counsel of Hastings how he should conduct towards the invading foe. Hastings advised negotiation, and was sent to the enemy

with two other persons, who understood the Norman language, to commence overtures for this purpose. The envoys stood on the banks of the Eure, which separated them from the Normans, and cried out to the pirates on the opposite shore, that they wished to speak to their chief. The Normans answered that they were 'all equal.' Being asked what was their design in invading the country, they answered, 'to subdue it.' They were again interrogated, whether they would not rather become the vassals of king Charles, and receive gifts of land to hold of him as their liege lord. In answer to this question, they all cried out with one voice, in the negative, and the deputation returned to the camp of the Franks. On his return, Hastings informed Ragnold that the Norman army consisted of the flower of the warlike youth of the North, and counselled him by no means to risk the unequal chances of battle with such a formidable foe. A standard-bearer, named Rotland, or Roullant, replied that this counsel might proceed from a treacherous intrigue of Hastings with his former countrymen, and as his intentions appeared to be distrusted by the other Frankish chieftains, Hastings retired in disgust from the council, quitted the army with his corps, and soon afterwards left France.*

* The old Norman poet, Robert Wace, has painted this scene with some effect:

Au duc Reinault alerent, si li firent entendre:
Que sa terre a perdue, s'il ne la peut defendre,
Normanz l'ont ja assise, (*a*) toute la veulent prendre.
Reinault une autre foiz à Hastainz reparla,
Et Hastainz du combattre tout le decomforta, (*b*)
" Normanz," ce dit, " fort et grant compaingnie ya,

(*a*) Assiégée; cernée. (*b*) Découraga.

Rollo waited in his entrenched camp the attack of the Franks, which was made at break of day. The Normans ranged in order of battle, and covered with their shields, repulsed the enemy. Rotland, or Roullant, who bore the gonfanon of the Franks, was slain; and duke Ragnold took flight with the whole army. After this success, Rollo assembled his companions and represented to them that the Franks having committed the first aggression, nothing was now to be done but to march on and subdue their towns and fortresses. The Normans accordingly broke up their camp on the Eure, marched along the banks of the Seine, and took Meulan by surprise, where they put all their prisoners to the sword, and went on ravaging the country to the walls of Paris. In the meantime, duke Ragnold had collected another army, with which he marched against the Normans, and offered them battle. The sea-rovers formed their band in the shape of a wedge, and penetrated the battalions of the Franks, prostrating all before them, and taking a great number of prisoners, whom

" Se il n'a plus grant gent, ja nes desconfira." (*a*)
" A donc!" dist un chevalier que l'on clamoit Roullant,
" Pourquoi demandez vous conseil à tel tiran?"
" L'en ne prent mie lou, ne gonpil souz son banc"—(*b*)
" La gent de son pais nos vait cen atraiant." (*c*)
Hastainz s'en couroucha, si respondit—" atant, (*d*)
Je n'en parleray mèz des icy en avant." (*e*)

ROMAN DE ROU.

(*a*) Il ne les vaincra pas.
(*b*) On ne prend pas ni loup ni renard sous son banc.
(*c*) Attirant.
(*d*) A menacing expression still used in part of Normandy.
(*e*) Dorenavant.

they dragged to their barks. Ragnold was left among the slain.

During the winter the Normans made an incursion into Burgundy, but were repulsed by the duke of that province, and compelled to return to the Seine. Having learnt that Bayeux was badly fortified, Rollo made 899.
a rapid movement towards that town, pillaged the surrounding country, and laid siege to the place. The burghers made a brave defence, and took prisoner a Norman chief, called Bothon. The Normans offered a suspension of arms for a year, upon condition that Bothon should be released. The offer was accepted, and Rollo retired along the Seine to the Marne, where he took possession of Meaux, and pushed his excursions quite to the Meuse. As soon as the truce had expired, the Normans suddenly attacked Bayeux, took it by sur- 900.
prise, and slew the governor, Count Berenger, with a great number of the inhabitants. This Count left a daughter of great beauty and accomplished, named Popa; whom Rollo espoused after the fashion of his country, and who bore him a son, William, and a daughter, named Adela.* Rollo then retired to his stronghold at Rouen, where his companions elected him their permanent chief, and where he employed himself in organizing his Norman colony. Under his firm and vigorous rule, the blessings of order and peace were once more restored to a country which had so long and so

* Rou en a fet sa mie, (*a*) qui mult l'a desirée,
De lié fu nai Willame qui ot nom Lunge-Espée,
Qui les Flamenz ocistrent par traïson provée.

ROMAN DE ROU

(*a*) En a fait sa mait.es-e.

cruelly suffered from the incursions of the Northern adventurers. He tolerated the Christians in their worship, and they flocked in crowds to live under the dominion of a Pagan and barbarian, in preference to their own native and Christian prince, who was unwilling or incapable to protect them. There must have been something truly great and magnanimous in the soul of this ferocious sea-rover, which thus elevated his views above those entertained by other adventurers of the same age and nation, and made him aspire to become the founder and legislator of a new state.* But as the Franks, who still continued to live under the sceptre of Charles, had but little pacific intercourse with the colony of Normans, planted on the banks of the Seine, the monkish chroniclers and annalists have left no record of the particular measures by which Rollo conciliated the affections both of his Pagan and Christian subjects, and so effectually consolidated his power as finally to wrest from the degenerate descendant of Charlemagne, the fairest and most fertile province of his vast dominions.*

For seven years the Frankish chronicles are silent respecting the ravages of the Normans. They still continued to occupy their strong holds on the Loire and the Garonne, as well as the Seine. In the mean time, Charles the Simple, influenced by motives of policy, with the view of preventing them from deriving assistance from England, had married the daughter of Edward
909. the Elder, son and successor of king Alfred. Charles

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 71—89. Capfigue, sur les Invasions des Normands, ch. ii. pp. 174—178. Suhm, Historie af Danmark tom. ii. pp. 441, 450, 456.

subsequently convened an ecclesiastical council at Trosley, in the Soissonnais, for the purpose of consulting on the general welfare of the church and the kingdom. The incursions of the Pagans had prevented the bishops and abbots from assembling for several years past; the monasteries and episcopal sees were burnt, ravaged, and plundered; and all these calamities were attributed by the clergy to the sins of the princes and the people, who no longer resisted the Pagan invaders, but disgracefully took to flight, or bowed their necks to the yoke of the Barbarians. The archbishop of Rouen, who lived under the rule of Rollo, wrote to consult Heriveus, the successor of Foulk in the see of Rheims, as to the line of conduct he ought to observe in this equivocal and difficult position. The archbishop of Rheims counselled his brother to be indulgent in respect to the converted Pagans, who relapsed, and returned to their old habits of idolatry and piracy. The pope himself has written to Heriveus, to the same effect; recommending moderation towards the Normans, who, after pretending to be converted, turned back again to their barbarous manners and practices, carried on a war of extermination against the Franks, massacred the priests and monks, and sacrificed to idols. The pontiff very wisely concluded that the usual penalties prescribed by the canons could not be applied to these Barbarians, to whom the yoke of the new religion must be lightened in order to render it at all supportable by their wild and intractable natures.*

A general confederation of all the Normans in France 911

* Suhm, H. af D., tom. ii. p. 483. Depping, tom. ii. ch. ix. pp. 89—90.

was now formed, under the chief command of Rollo, for the purpose of penetrating the heart of the kingdom by the streams of its three great rivers, the Seine, the Loire, and the Garonne, and ravaging all the intermediate country. One band ascended the Loire, burnt and pillaged Nantz, Angers, Tours, and other cities on the banks of this river, whilst another marched rapidly upon Paris, to take the capital by surprise. Charles the Simple, panic-struck at the prospect of this double invasion, addressed himself to Francon, archbishop of Rouen, entreating him to solicit from Rollo, his sovereign, a truce of three months. "My kingdom is laid waste," said the monarch to the prelate, "my subjects are destroyed or driven into exile; the fields are no longer ploughed or sown. Tell the Norman that I am well disposed to make a lasting peace with him, and that if he will become a Christian, I will give him broad lands and rich presents." Rollo readily consented to the proposal, and the truce was strictly observed both by the Franks and the Normans, but on the expiration of the stipulated term, the former immediately recommenced hostilities without notifying the expiration of the truce. Rollo, irritated by what he regarded as an act of perfidy, renewed his invasions with increased violence and barbarity. He pushed his ravages quite to the Loire, whilst another band of Normans invaded the south of France by the Garonne, and the bishops in that quarter wrote to pope Anastasius that they were unable to journey to Rome, on account of the great roads being infested by the Normans and Saracens. Rollo laid siege to the city of Chartres, which was defended by a fortress on the top of the hill. In a grotto, situated in the side of this hill, where the Druids had formerly

celebrated their mysteries, the inhabitants of Chartres preserved with religious veneration an ancient image of St Mary. They also possessed a tunic, formerly belonging to the Virgin, which was brought from Constantinople, and presented by Charles the Bald to their cathedral. At the approach of the invaders, the bishop sent to solicit aid from Richard duke of Burgundy, Robert Count of Paris, the brother of Eudes, and other great crown vassals, who assembled a corps of Franks and Burgundians, and came to the assistance of the good and brave prelate. The Normans were attacked by these troops, and the bishop at the same time exhorted the burghers to sally forth upon the enemy. He assembled the people in the cathedral, mounted the sacred pulpit, and preached to them "how the Normans were *Saracens*, and enemies of God, and that all who were slain in fighting against them should surely be saved." He then gave them absolution, and celebrated mass. The people flew to arms, and the bishop sallied forth at their head in his pontificals, preceded by a crucifix, and bearing upon the point of his lance the tunic of the Virgin. All his clergy followed chaunting hymns to the Queen of Heaven. The Normans, thus attacked in front and rear by a formidable force, inflamed with patriotic resentment and religious enthusiasm, were unable to make an effectual resistance. They sustained a great loss, and Rollo fled quite to Rouen, pursued by the victorious Franks, whilst another band of his countrymen retired and took up a strong position on a neighbouring mountain.*

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 91—98. Capfigue, ch. iv. pp. 178—179. Suhm, H. af D. tom. ii. pp. 487—491.

Rollo soon recovered from the effects of his rout at Chartres, and once more commenced his ravaging incursions into the interior of the kingdom. Duke Richard marched against him, accompanied by the warlike bishop of Auxerre, who distinguished himself by his courage and enterprise in the partisan warfare carried on against the scattered bands of the Normans. The expiring energy of the nation could not be rekindled by a few solitary examples of patriotic spirit like these, among the great crown vassals, which constituted exceptions to their general want of public spirit and union among themselves. The people, who had supported with exemplary patience the heavy burthens imposed upon them by the great, as well as the cruelties and robberies inflicted by the barbarian invaders, at last burst forth in loud and bitter complaints at the conduct of their rulers. Charles had received the most solemn representations from the prelates and barons, assembled in a parliament or plaid, entreating him to take pity upon the sufferings of the wretched people in a desolated country, where the land no longer yielded rent to the lord, the fields and vineyards were laid waste, the peasantry scattered abroad, and the highways deserted by pilgrim and merchant. To these representations the king answered: "You should have counselled and aided me to expel the Normans; what could I do alone against these ferocious enemies?"* Charles sent archbishop Francon with propositions to

* Que peut faire un seul homme? et que peut exploitier?
Si li homme li faillent qui li doivent aidier?
Bonne gent fait roi fort, et cil fait estre fier.

ROMAN DE ROU.

Rollo, offering to him the cession of Neustria, and his natural daughter Gisele in marriage, provided he would become a Christian, and live in peace with the Franks. Rollo accepted these terms of pacification, only he objected to the lands offered him, that the country was already ruined and desolate, and incapable of subsisting his army. The king then offered him Flanders, to which he also objected, as being too marshy, and in order to content him, Brittany, a province, of which the sovereignty did not belong to Charles, was added to the territory proposed to be ceded to the Normans. "Thus, Charles," says an old Breton historian and lawyer, "ceded to Rollo the ancient quarrel respecting the sovereignty of Brittany; not that he designed that Rollo should succeed in what both he and all his predecessors of the Carlovingian line had failed to accomplish, but he might, perchance by this means, regain the said dominion, tenancy, and arrière-fief, without cost and charge to himself, and if he had lost his new son-in-law in the contest, it would have been just what he wished; he would then have reclaimed Normandy, and with it the homage of Brittany, and if this should not happen, as in fact it did not, things would remain just where they were, and he would neither gain nor lose."*

The basis of the treaty being thus agreed to on both sides, king Charles and Rollo, chief of the Normans, had an interview at the village of Saint-Clair, on the Epte, for the purpose of putting a finishing hand to the negotiation. Rollo and his companions came to one side of the river, whilst the king and his barons remained on the other. Here king Charles and Robert, duke of

* D'Argentré, Histoire de Bretagne.

the Franks, the counts, and the great crown vassals, the bishops and the abbots, confirmed by their oaths the cession made to Rollo, whilst the chief of the Normans took the feudal oath of fealty, placing his hands between those of the king, in token of homage for the duchy of Normandy. At sight of the commanding person, the martial and dignified air, of the Norman chieftain, the Franks acknowleged with one voice that he was a man well becoming the great seigniory he was to hold.* He refused to submit to the degrading ceremony of kissing the king's foot, but deputed one of his followers to perform this part of the homage in his stead. The insolent Barbarian lifted up the king's foot, which he offered him to kiss, so high that Charles was thrown backward on the ground, to the great amusement of the spectators: an incident which would seem hardly credible, were it not vouched by the unanimous testimony of all the historians of the time, both Franks and Normans.†

After this scene, Charles the Simple returned to his own dominions, whilst Rollo was accompanied to Rouen

* "Dirent les Français que bien appartenait à tel homme tenir grande Seigneurie."—Chronique des Normands.

† Rollo swore, "by God, *Ne se bi Goth*, that he would neither bow the knee, nor kiss the foot for any man," whence he afterwards acquired the name of *Bigot*, or *Bigod*; and Robert Wace makes the Norman chieftain himself guilty of an act of contemptuous rudeness to the king:

Rou devint hom li Roiz, et sez mains li livra;
Quant baisier du le pié, baisier ne se daingna,
La main tendi aval, le pié au Roiz leva,
A sa bouche le traist, et li Roiz renversa,
Assez s'en ristrent tuit, et le Roiz se drescha.(*a*)

ROMAN DE ROU.

(*a*) i.e. Tout le monde en rit assez, et le roi se leva.

by duke Robert, where he was baptised by the archbishop Francon, duke Robert being his god-father, whose Christian name he took. Many of the Frankish nobility were present at this ceremony. Rollo received rich presents from the duke, and most of his companions followed his example in being baptised into the new religion. Both he and they were soon marked for their profuse liberality and blind obedience to the clergy they had plundered and massacred. Those who refused, received presents of arms, money, and horses, and went whither they would, beyond the seas, to return to their own native land, or to pursue their career of wild and lawless adventure. Rollo had repudiated the daughter of Count Berenger, whom, in fact, he had never married (at least according to Christian rites), and he now espoused Gisele, the natural daughter of Charles, by which alliance it was hoped that the union of the two nations would be firmly cemented. He distributed among his companions and followers the lands in the country which had been hitherto called Neustria, to be held of him, as their duke and feudal lord. The foundations of the feudal system were thus laid in Normandy, which was perfected under the successors of Rollo, and afterwards transplanted in full vigour into England by the Conqueror.*

The conduct of Charles, in thus dismembering his monarchy, has been bitterly censured by most of the French historians, even those who are in general least disposed to blame the conduct of their sovereigns. But it would have been difficult even for a wiser and a braver

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 101—114. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 494—497.

man, under the same disadvantages, to have determined on a line of conduct more politic and better adapted to the circumstances. The national spirit and courage of the Franks had been constantly degenerating under his predecessors of the Carlovingian line. Flanders, and all the country to the north and east of Neustria, was already dismembered from the monarchy. The Counts of Paris aimed at the crown, which they afterwards grasped. The province, now ceded, had been for several years in quiet and undisputed possession of the Normans, by whose incursions it had been desolated and ruined. The only means left of securing the rest of the kingdom against their ravages, was to confirm them in the possession of what they had already subdued, and in this respect, Charles did no more than what was fully justified by the event, as well as by the example already given by Alfred in England. At the same time, he secured a counterpoise to the rising power of the Counts of Paris, and though the power of the dukes of Normandy became ultimately formidable to the kings of France of the third dynasty, the last descendants of the race of Charlemagne always found in Rollo and his successors, the faithful supporters of their tottering throne.

It is remarkable, that the terms of a treaty attended with consequences so important, should nowhere be preserved in an authentic form. Whether it was ever in fact reduced to writing, seems a matter of great uncertainty, especially as the Normans never made their contracts, public or private, in a written form. They were concluded in the presence of witnesses, and preserved by tradition, and the testimony of the vicinage. None of the numerous grants of land made by Rollo to churches and convents are vouched by written instru-

ments. The lands were measured, not with a *rod*, according to the universal custom in use among the Romans, the Franks, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Germans, but with a *cord*, the instrument for measuring land always used by the Scandinavian nations. In the confirmations of Rollo's grants, made by formal charters in writing, under duke Richard II, and others of his successors, the fact of the original grant having been made verbally, is always expressly mentioned; and it is well known, that down to the time of William the Conqueror, the Norman seigneurs accompanied the investiture of their vassals with the delivery of an arrow, a bow, a sword, or some such symbol. The livery of seisin, introduced by them into England, uniformly dispensed with a written deed. We may thus easily comprehend why Rollo was satisfied with such an investiture as he received of the duchy of Normandy; but that the Franks, who had long been accustomed to the use of written charters, both in their public and private transactions, should have neglected to define the terms and conditions, as well as the geographical limits of so extensive a cession of territory, is almost incredible. The original charter, if it ever existed, may have been, as M. Depping supposes, carried away by the kings of England of the Norman line, deposited in the Tower of London, and afterwards accidentally lost, or it may have been intentionally destroyed by some of the kings of France, who sought to recover this dominion, in order to obliterate every trace of its dismemberment from the crown of France.

Rollo established in his new duchy a feudal aristocracy, or rather it necessarily grew out of the peculiar circumstances under which the province was subdued

and settled, as naturally as a patriarchal aristocracy arose in Iceland, under a very different state of things. Rollo and his companions, when they first landed in Neustria, were 'all equal;' but in the progress of conquest, the habits of military obedience raised him, who had been only first among equals, to the supreme authority among his countrymen, who freely elected him their duke. His companions became counts and barons, and the freemen who were his followers, knights or inferior vassals. These were consulted by him and his successors on all important occasions of national concern. The clergy were for a long time excluded from this great council or parliament, because they were Franks, and necessarily kept at a distance by national prejudice and jealousy. But the two nations were soon blended together by intermarriages, by the influence of religion, and by adopting the same laws and judicial institutions. The Grand Coutoumier, the earliest monument of Norman legislation now extant, states that duke Rollo, having become sovereign of Neustria, *recorded*, *i. e.* collected the ancient customs of the country, which could have been no other than the laws of the Franks, and where any doubt or difficulty occurred in ascertaining these, he consulted "with many sage men, to whom the truth was known, as to what had been of old time said and done:" to which he added other new laws, drawn up by the same counsellors.* The feudal law was first reduced to a system by the subtle intellect of the Norman lawyers. It was afterwards transplanted in all its vigour into England by the Conqueror, who used it as an effectual in-

* Houard, Anciens Loix des Français, &c. tom. i. Discours Preliminaire, p. 25.

strument of consolidating his power, and establishing a more powerful monarchy than any which had existed in Europe since the time of Charlemagne. The custom of Normandy has many analogies with the ancient Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon laws, and these different people have borrowed so much from each other, and were so often blended and confounded together in their wars, conquests, and migrations, that it is difficult to distinguish with accuracy the origin of their various judicial institutions. Rollo is said to have established the Court of Exchequer, as the supreme tribunal of justice, and the perfect security afforded by the admirable system of police, established in England by king Alfred, is also attributed to the legislation of the first duke of Normandy. The chronicles of the duchy illustrate the perfection of this security, by repeating with some variations, the same story of the bracelets or purse of gold suspended by the road side, which is told of Alfred, and is also mentioned in the early annals of Denmark. If this is not a merely poetical mode of expressing the public security enjoyed under the firm and impartial administration of justice by the princes of the time, it is most likely to have actually occurred in Denmark, where it is assigned to the reign of Frode, the celebrated royal legislator of the race of Odin, six or seven centuries earlier than the other legends. Even the famous *Clameur de Haro*, or 'hue and cry,' by which, as in the Anglo-Saxon laws, the neighbouring hundred was made responsible for all offences committed in the vicinage, has been appropriated to Rollo, as if both the institution and its name had been derived from him. But the term is in fact derived from compounding two Icelandic words, importing, with remarkable significance,

the nature of this peculiar process; and it is probable, that if it was not, for the first time introduced into Neustria by Rollo, he is at least entitled to the merit of having confirmed and invigorated a custom so remarkably adapted to preserve good order in a barbarous community.*

Trial by battle, or judicial combat, was a favorite mode of appealing to the judgment of God, among the warlike nations of Scandinavia, but it was also a mode of judicial procedure, recognized in all the codes of the barbarous tribes (except in the Salic law) who established themselves on the ruins of the Roman empire. It had, however, almost fallen into disuse in France under the latter Carlovingians, and was revived, with fresh vigour, after the conquest of Neustria by the Normans. Those fierce warriors disdained the mode of terminating controversies most favored by the clergy—the ordeal of fire or water, though there is one remarkable example of the ordeal of red-hot iron administered to a peasant's wife by Rollo; but no other instance occurs, at least between the laity, until after the Norman conquest of England.† The usage of private war continued also to linger in the province of Normandy long after it was abolished in the rest of France, by the combined influence of the crown and clergy. Examples of trial by battle occur in the Norman annals in comparatively modern times, and it is well known that it was introduced into Sicily

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 127—134. The term *Clameur de Haro* doubtless originates in the Icelandic *her-óp*, i. e. *cry of army* or *cry of war*, as in French *à moi l'armée*;—*her* (Icl.), *hær* (Dan.) army, and *óp*, whoop or outcry.

† Houard, Anciennes Loix des Français, &c. tom. i. pp. 221, 222, 267.

and England by the Normans, and made part of the English common law until the present reign, though no practical instance of its being put in execution has occurred since that of James I.*

Few external traces of the Scandinavian origin of the Normans, are to be found at this day in that province of France upon which they have fixed their name. The origin of the primitive type of that peculiar style of architecture called Norman, and of which there are so many fine specimens remaining, both in Normandy and England, has hitherto baffled the curiosity of the enquirers into the history of art. It cannot be traced to a Northern source, as the period of society when the Scandinavians established themselves in Neustria, was previous to the erection of any considerable buildings of stone in the countries from which they migrated. The semicircular arch,—the principal distinctive feature which separates the proper Norman architecture from the Gothic,—was probably an imitation of the Roman style of building, or it may have been an improvement of the Anglo-Saxon arch, which, again, was borrowed from the Roman. Probably the sound conclusion is, that the Normans brought with them to the South that inventive genius and activity of intellect, and that taste for magnificence and splendour in their arms, ornaments, and dress, and especially their naval equipments, which, when applied to the cultivation of architecture and the other imitative arts, produced the peculiar style which has been denominated Norman. The old Sagas are full of examples of this prevailing taste among the Scan-

† Capfigue, sur les Invasions des Normands, pp. 340—346; and Note, p. 390.

dinavians; and that all the elements of poetry existed among them, is abundantly evident from their early history and mythology, and from the existing remains of the works of their ancient Skalds. At the time of their permanent establishment in Gaul, they found the separation of the rustic, or vulgar tongue, which had been gradually formed in that province of the Western empire, from the corruption of the Latin, completely effected. The *langue d'oui* was spoken to the north, and the *langue d'oc* to the south of the Loire. The langue d'oui, or the Roman-Wallon tongue, had not yet received that literary cultivation which afterwards made it the the peculiar language of romance and romantic poetry. This cultivation was bestowed upon it by the Normans, who, whilst they embraced the religion, adopted the laws and the language of the vanquished people.* All these, however, were greatly modified by the peculiar character and genius of the Norman race, which strongly impressed itself upon all their deeds in arts and in arms. No Runic inscription is to be found in Normandy—no verse of any Skald fastened itself upon the memory of her people—and no traditionary tale of their Scandinavian ancestors has been preserved among them. In this respect, they may justly be said to have passed the stream of Lethe when they crossed the seas which separated them for ever from the abode of their fathers—that land of gods and

* William Long-Sword sent his son Richard to Bayeux, to learn old Danish, because the language had already been superseded at Rouen, the capital of the duchy, by the Romanz; and a Norman count, who came to the court of William I, king of Sicily, excused himself for his ignorance of French, but he was from that part of Normandy where the old Danish remained longest.

heroes, where their peculiar national character was originally formed and developed. But the great original features of this character were indelible, and were still preserved when this branch of the noble old Gothic stem was engrafted upon the Gallo-Frankish. All the elements of the true spirit of chivalry previously existed among them in its most exuberant form—the love of wild and romantic adventure, daring courage and skill in arms—devotion to the female sex, compounded of superstition and romantic gallantry. The Norman knight enacted a splendid part in the great drama of the crusades. The Norman-French poet, or trouvère, supplied the place of the ancient Skald, and became as distinguished at the courts of the dukes of Normandy and kings of England, of the Norman line, as was his predecessor at those of the Norwegian and Danish monarchs, or the troubadours at those of Arles and Toulouse. The Anglo-Norman kings were not merely lovers and patrons of poetry, but, like the Haralds and Ragnars of the North, some of them practised this delightful art. Henry I obtained the name of Beauclerk by his attachment to the national literature, and his queens, Matilda and Alice, were its bountiful patrons. Henry II was unaffectedly, if not munificently, the encourager of historical poetry, and Richard Cœur-de-Lion was a trouvère, whose poetical compositions have been handed down to our own times.

Whilst we abstain from entering into the boundless field of controversy, as to the origin of modern romance and romantic fiction, exclusively attributed by some to the Scandinavians, by others, to the Saracens, and by a third party of literary historians, to the Armorican inhabitants of Brittany, it may in general be observed,

that the workings of the human fancy will be found to bear a strong family likeness wherever the circumstances and condition of the race are nearly similar. To use the beautiful language of an author, himself at once a poet and a philosopher,—"Fiction travels on still lighter wings [than science], and scatters the seeds of her wild flowers imperceptibly over the world, until they surprise us by springing up with similarity in regions the most remotely divided."* The popular mythology and superstitions of every age and country, not even excepting the classic nations of antiquity, are interwoven together, and constantly present a perpetual recurrence of the same fictions, closely connected with the moral and physical being of man, and which have ever furnished to the romancer and the poet their favourite subjects and their choicest imagery. The Norman minstrels, appropriated the fictions and personages they found already accredited among the people for whom they versified—the British king Arthur, his fabled knights of the Round Table, and the enchanter Merlin, with his wonderful prophecies — the Frankish monarch Charlemagne and his paladins—and the rich inventions of oriental fancy, borrowed from the Arabs and the Moors. The Eddaic and heroic lays of the North were to them unknown, but the spirit of the muse, which had inspired these ancient songs, still continued its secret workings in the national character. The Northern romantic Sagas of the middle ages, which borrow their fictions and their imagery from the popular traditions of the South, bear a strong similitude to the romances and fabliaux of the Norman-French.

* Thomas Campbell.

Not so with their history. Wide indeed is the interval between the Northern annalists, who wrote in their vernacular tongue from the tenth to the thirteenth century inclusive, Are-frode, Snorre Sturleson, or even the monkish biographers of Olaf Tryggvason,* and such chroniclers as Dudon de St Quentin, William de Jumiège, and Robert Wace, who wrote during the same period, under the patronage of the dukes of Normandy and kings of England, of the Norman line. The rhymed chronicle, composed by the latter is, however, justly appreciated as a monument of the language and as an historical document, incorrect indeed in many of its details, but highly valuable as a faithful picture of the state of society in the middle ages. Wace was born in the island of Jersey, towards the commencement of the twelfth century, and died in England in 1184. Consequently he was a cotemporary of the three Henries, kings of England and dukes of Normandy during that century. He received his education at Caen, and afterwards fixed his residence in that town, where Henry I. usually held his Norman court. Among other works, he translated into Norman-French, from the Latin of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the old British history of Brut-y-Brerhined, which Wace published,

* To these may be added another very curious book, the Kongs-Skugg-Sio, or *Speculum Regale*, written by an anonymous author (supposed to be king Sverre) in Norway, towards the end of the twelfth century, and which, though not strictly an historical work, is full of the most valuable information respecting the state of society, and the economy of human life, in the countries of the North, during the middle ages, and to which the cotemporary vernacular literature of no other European nation can furnish a parallel.

under the title of *Brut d'Angleterre*, in the form of a poem, containing 18,000 verses of eight syllables. But his most important work, and the one which has the closest connection with the present subject, is the *Roman de Rou*, or history of the dukes of Normandy, from the first invasion by Rollo down to the sixth year of king Henry I. This historical poem, written under the patronage of Henry II, contains exactly 16,547 verses. The first or introductory part, is written in verses of eight syllables, and contains the history of the first invasions of France and England by the Northmen or Danes. The second, in Alexandrine verses, includes the history of duke Rollo or Rou; the third, in the same metre, the history of William Long-Sword and duke Richard I. his son: and the fourth, in the same octo-syllabic measure with the first, contains the sequel of the history of Richard, and that his successors to the year 1106.

Robert Wace generally follows his predecessors, Dudon and William of Jumièges as his guides in the pursuit of historical facts. He is less credulous than these ecclesiastical writers, but agrees with them in representing the primitive Normans as ferocious Barbarians, destitute of every redeeming virtue. No wonder that the clergy, both in France and England, who were the principal sufferers by their cruel incursions, and who (to use their own expressions) "wrote amidst the smoke of their burning monasteries, with a trembling hand, and their blood frozen with fear,"—should be unable or unwilling to do justice to the heroic qualities of their Pagan conquerors.* But Wace has given animation and colour to the lifeless narratives of his predecessors,

* Depping, tom. i. Discours Préliminaire, p. xl.

and if there is not much of the soul of poetry or the philosophic spirit of history in this rhymed chronicle, at least he pourtrays with fidelity the men and manners of the time, and even his most incredible legends are valuable proofs of popular opinion.*

Benedict St Maur was another of the ecclesiastics retained by Henry II, to write the history of his predecessors, dukes of Normandy and kings of England. His chronicle in verse is principally translated from the monkish historians above-mentioned, with additions from some other unknown sources, and contains about 46,000 verses. His style is more antiquated and difficult to be understood than that of Robert Wace, which is probably to be attributed to his having been educated in that part of Normandy where the old Danish language was longest preserved.†

* The first part of the Roman de Rou was published, with a Danish translation in verse by Prof. Bröndsted, at Copenhagen in 1817—18. The text of the entire work has been since published in a beautiful edition at Rouen in Normandy, in 1827, in two 8vo. vols. with valuable notes by M. Pluquet.

† The only existing MS. of this rhymed chronicle is that now preserved in the British Museum. M. Depping has published a considerable portion of it in his excellent work.

CHAPTER XIII.

Reign of Gorm the Old in Denmark.—Constitution of the monarchy.—Free spirit of the people.—Expulsion of Erik Blodœxe from Norway.—His death and *Drápa*.—Hakon the Good attempts to introduce Christianity into Norway.—Opposition of the nation.—Sigurd Jarl.—Death of Hakon.—The *Hákonar-mál*, or elegiac lay of Hakon.

WHILST the Norman adventurers were engaged in these distant and eventful expeditions in the southern countries of Europe, an important revolution had occurred in Denmark, similar to that which happened about the same period in Norway under Harald Fairhaired, and in Sweden under king Erik Edmundson.

Gorm, the son of Harde-Knud I, surnamed the Old, from the length of his reign, was enabled, by a similar concurrence of circumstances, to subdue the petty kings of Jutland, and to unite into one state the different countries which now constitute the Danish monarchy, including the provinces of Scania and Halland, since ceded to Sweden by the treaty of 1720. This change was facilitated both in Norway and Denmark by the absence of many of the petty kings, Jarls, and other principal chieftains, in distant sea-roving and other predatory expeditions. Gorm had distinguished himself in his early youth for his wild, adventurous spirit in common with the other Norman invaders of

France, was subsequently engaged in a sea-roving expedition along the coasts of the Baltic, and penetrated with a band of Væringjar and other adventurers to Smolensko and Kiow, in Russia. He had espoused the famous Thyra Dannebod, daughter of Harald, a Jarl of Jutland, who was converted to Christianity in France, during the reign of Louis le Debonnaire, and had caused his daughter to be baptized into the new religion in her childhood. Her influence contributed to induce king Gorm to tolerate the preaching of the Christian Missionaries in his dominions, although he continued to revere the ancient national deities, who had been worshipped by his ancestors.* A thick cloud of obscurity hangs over the events of his long and important reign, which the diligent researches of the national historians have not entirely succeeded in removing. According to the testimonies of the German chroniclers, his career of conquest was arrested by the emperor Henry the Fowler, the first of that name and of the Saxon line, who vanquished his son Knud, compelled him to embrace Christianity, and passing not only the river Eyder, but the famous rampart called the *Danne-wirke*, subdued the country, forming the present duchy of Sleswick. From the same testimony we learn that Henry extorted from the Danish monarch, as a condition of peace, the abolition of human sacrifices, which were practised at Lethra, in Zealand, in the same manner as the Romans required from the Carthaginians a similar stipulation in their treaty after the second Punic war. The Danish historians and publicists, in

* Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. ii. pp. 362—365. 399—403. 435—440.

their extreme anxiety to establish the theory of their country, having subsisted as a united and independent monarchy from the time of Gorm the Old, have contested the accuracy of those accounts which refer to the establishment of the March of Sleswick, north of the Eyder, by the emperor Henry I, and to his supposed victories over the son of Gorm, followed by a humiliating peace with the Danish monarch. But the authenticity of these accounts seems too well established by the weight of authority, to render them questionable, in substance at least, whatever discrepancy may exist in the various and incidental details by which the different narratives of these events are accompanied.*

After the cessation of this war with the emperor, archbishop Unni undertook a mission to Denmark, where he was favourably received by queen Thyra, who caused her son Harald, afterwards king Harald Blaatand, to be baptized. Many of the Danes of illustrious birth, as well as of the inferior orders, followed the example of their princes. The new religion was now freely and publicly professed throughout the kingdom; churches and cloisters arose in Jutland. The archbishop crossed the Belts, and extended his missionary labours into the islands of the Danish archipelago—to Fionia and to Zealand, where the Goddess of the Earth had been so long worshipped with dark and mysterious rites, until they were superseded by the Odinish dispensation, and where the fires of sacrifice still ascended, and every ninth year were stained with human gore. From Zealand the

* Suhm, H. af D. tom. ii. pp. 566—571. Gram, Observ. de Henrici Aucupis Expeditione, &c. in Miscell. Leips. No. 228—234. Schlegel, Staats-Recht des Königreichs Dänemark, tom. i. p. 19. Note, pp. 28, 29.

apostolic missionary passed over by sea to Birca, in Swe- 935.
den, where he found few and faint traces left of the holy faith which had been sown there by his illustrious forerunner, Ancharius.*

The consolidation of the monarchy in Denmark and Norway under Gorm the Old and Harald Fair-haired, together with the introduction of Christianity into these countries, and the partial cessation of the irregular sea-roving expeditions, naturally produced an extensive change in the political institutions of the North. During the heroic age, the power of the kings was extremely limited, and though they were always taken from the families of the Ynlings and the Skioldungs, to whom the national superstition attributed a divine origin, yet the choice among the various descendants of the sacred stock was perfectly free, and was confirmed by the voice of the people, who surrounded the rude stone on which the new monarch was elevated, amidst the clash of arms and the shouts of the multitude. As in all barbarous communities, so in the countries of the North, great respect was paid to birth, and the heroic families of illustrious descent exercised an extensive influence over the people; but the popular consent, as collected in the general national assembly (Thing, or All-Thing), was essential in every measure of common concern. As to the distant maritime and other predatory expeditions, they were, for the most part, mere private adventures, undertaken and carried on by voluntary associations of different chieftains, with their own confederates, in which supreme military authority was exercised by the leader, tempered by the original equality of his free companions. Thus

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. pp. 346—353.

we have seen, that when Sigefrid stipulated to abandon the siege of Paris upon the payment of a sum of money by the Franks, his fellow adventurers refused to follow him, and insisted on continuing the siege on their own account. So, also, when the envoys of Charles the Simple went to treat with the Norman invaders under Rollo, and demanded to speak with their commander, they answered that they were 'all equal.' At home, the authority of the kings was limited, both by the influence of the aristocracy of the heroic families, and by the wild, ferocious, and independent temper of the people, who are described, even long after this period, by Adam of Bremen, as preferring death to stripes, submitting to the former with a firm and joyful countenance, disdaining sighs and tears, and those other signs of grief and sorrow by which civilized men testify their painful emotions.*

The spirit of such a people could not easily be tamed even by powerful and energetic conquerors like Gorm and Harald. But the power of the monarchs must have been greatly augmented by the destruction of the petty kings in Denmark and Norway, and the union of the different tribes under one common chieftain, of a race sprung from the gods and heroes of the ancient North, and possessing personal qualities to command the obedience of Barbarians. Thus the Danish monarchy continued, to a certain degree, compact, and hereditary
941— in the successors of Gorm the Old, until the time of
1047. Sweno II, or Svend Estrithson,—the founder of what has been called the second, or middle, dynasty of Danish

* Regis vis pendet ex sententia populi. Quod in communione laudaverint omnes, illum confirmare opportet. Domi pares gaudent. Decollare malunt, quam verberari—lacrimas et planctum cæteraque compunctionis genera, abominantur Dani, &c.

kings. This firmly established unity and hereditary quality of the state, contributed to enable such a monarch as Knud II, or Canute the Great, to accomplish what the irregular efforts of so many adventurers had in vain attempted, the subjugation of the Anglo-Saxons, and the conquest of England. Still, the authority of the kings, however despotically exercised in practice by these powerful military sovereigns, was far from being unlimited in settled law and general estimation. The popular voice was still heard in the general national assembly of the *Adel-thing*, or *Dannhof*, or in the partial assemblies of the local districts, called the *Lands-thing*. The introduction of Christianity brought into the state a new and powerful order of men, which, if it in some degree contributed to strengthen the power and influence of the crown, by giving it the sanction of the church, was in other respects adapted to temper its authority, and prevent its degenerating into unlimited despotism.*

Whilst Harald Blaatand succeeded peacefully to the 940.
sceptre of the united kingdom of Denmark, the people of Norway shook off the bloody yoke of tyranny, under which they had groaned for five long years. Hakon, though educated in a foreign land, and in a religion unknown to their fathers, was received with joy, as a deliverer from the intolerable tyranny of his brother Erik. The principal Jarls, and especially Sigurd, the uncle of Hakon on the mother's side, who had been his god-father when he was sprinkled with water, after the heathen fashion, in his infancy, espoused his cause; whilst his own youthful beauty, his tall, robust, and manly

* Schlegel, Staats-Recht, &c. tom. i. pp. 44—49. 65. Note. Kolderup Rosenvinge, Grundris af den Danske Lovhistorie, tom. i. pp. 19, 20—26.

figure, with the personal virtues which popular fame attributed to his heroic character, recommended him to the sympathy of the multitude. Erik was compelled to yield to the superior fortune and virtues of his younger brother, who was freely chosen, in the assembly of the people, king of all Norway. Erik fled with his adherents to the Orkney isles, where he became a Sea-King, and depredated on the coasts of Scotland and England. Athelstane soon after conferred upon him the kingdom of Northumbria, a country already peopled with Danes, upon condition that he and his followers should embrace Christianity, and defend the coasts against the incursions of other Vikingar. But his Barbarian habits were inveterate, and in the reign of Edred, son of Edward the Elder, he again resorted to his old practices of piracy, and collecting a band of his former Norwegian adherents and other sea-rovers, invaded Northumbria, from which he had been driven by the Anglo-Saxons. Edred collected his forces, and marched against the Northmen. Their quarrel was decided in a great battle, in which Erik with five other Sea-Kings was slain, and Northumbria was once more annexed to the Anglo-Saxon monarchy.*

Notwithstanding the pretended conversion of Erik to Christianity, he is represented in one of the last strains of the heathen Skalds, as invited to take his seat among the kings and heroes deemed worthy to inherit the joys of Valhalla. This elegiac lay, called *Eriks drápa*, a fragment only of which now remains, was probably chaunted at the funeral obsequies of Erik. It is in the

* Snorre, Saga Hákonar Góda, cap. i.—iv. Turner's Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. ch. vii. pp. 115—118. Schöning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. ii. pp. 270—301.

form of a dramatic dialogue, in which Odin and Bragi are the interlocutors, and Sigmund, one of the heroes of the Volsunga-saga, is summoned by Odin to advance and receive the Norwegian king.

ODIN.

What mean these dreams?
Methought I rose
before the dawn,
Valhall for the feast preparing
warriors in battle slain expecting—
The blest heroes * I awoke,
bidding them rise—
the seats prepare
and rinse the cups—
the Valkyrur wine to bring
as if a King should come.
Surely from the World
some heroes I await
in fame illustrious,
that thus my heart rejoices.

BRAGI.†

What thundering noise is that,
as if the host of thousands
were hither moving on?
The walls and vaults resound
as if back to his Father's halls
good Balder should return.

ODIN.

Now Bragi, thou
not wisely talks,

* *Einherjar*—the heroic spirits of Valhalla.

† *Bragi*—son of Odin and Frigga, the god of poetry, sister of Iduna, the goddess of the imagination.

although most things thou knowest.
The noise is Erik's thundering tread,
Erik the King,
who soon my hall will reach.
Sigmundr and Sinfjötli!
Quickly arise,
and go to meet the King.
Erik if indeed it be,
invite him hither!
Him I await.

SIGMUNDR.

Why Erik, more than other kings,
is he expected here?

* * * * (*)

ODIN.

Because in many a land
his lance he dyed in blood,
and swung his dripping sword.

SIGMUNDR.

But wherefore hast thou then denied him victory,
him in thy eyes so valiant and so bold?

* * * * (*)

ODIN.

The battle's fate is never sure:
the Wolf of War, though fierce,
to seats of Gods the hero leads.

(*) There appears to be wanting in each of these strophes a line in the metre; perhaps a mere refrain, containing some idea unconnected with the history of Erik.

SIGMUNDR.

Erik! hail to thee now!
and welcome hither.
Enter the hall—thou Brave!
Yet must I ask,
did other Kings thee hither follow
from the battle's strife?

ERIK.

Five Kings are with me here,
whose names will I recite,
I am the Sixth myself.

The constant intercourse of the Norwegians with the more civilized countries of Europe and the East, must have familiarized them at an early period with the doctrines and rites of Christianity, as understood in that age. Many of the Sea-Kings, and other adventurers, who resorted to England for the purposes of piracy or commerce, had consented to receive the sign of the cross as a badge of their adherence to the religion of the Anglo-Saxons. On their return to their native country, they made no scruple to conform to the external practices of heathenism, believing that Thor, and the other deities of the North, were to be adored as the local gods of Norway, in the same manner as Christ was worshipped in England as the national god of that country. On some minds, more lasting impressions were probably made; and the simple and sublime idea of the existence of one God, the creator and governor of the universe, the supreme object of the worship of all mankind, was not unknown to them in their old mythology. The capacious mind of Harald Hárfager had early taught him to despise the inferior deities of his country, to whom it

was his duty, as the ruler of the people, to offer solemn sacrifices for a fruitful season, for peace, and for victory over their enemies: and his heroic soul burst forth on one occasion in a public assembly of the people, with earnest conviction of the impotence of the false gods they were accustomed to revere. "I solemnly promise and swear," said Harald, "that I will no more sacrifice to the national deities, but to that God alone will I sacrifice, who the world and all that therein is, the sun, the stars, and the children of men, has created, and by whose aid alone can I subdue this realm of Norway: and even if Thor were on my side, what help should I look for from him whose only power and dominion consists in a stock or a stone?"

Harald's son, Hakon, who had been educated in the new religion at the court of his foster-father, king Athelstane, brought with him from England some Christian priests and missionaries, and openly proclaimed his intention of protecting them in the propagation of their faith. He convened a national assembly of the people, in which he stood up and declared to all there met, "as well rich as poor, whether noble, peasant, or serf, young and old, men and women, his will and his desire that they should be baptized and believe in the one true God, the son of Mary (laying aside the vain worship of the heathen deities), fast every Friday, and rest every seventh day." But neither the Jarls, nor the priests, nor the people, were inclined to listen to this proposition. Murmurs arose in the assembly against it, when a rich and popular land-holder arose and answered the king in these words: "When thou first held with us here in Trondheim the assembly of the people, and thus restored us our ancient right, it was to us, O King! a matter of

thanks and of exceeding joy. When we set thee as king over us, we thought heaven had conferred upon us its choicest gift. But now we know not what to think, that thou who didst restore to us our lost freedom, shouldst desire to fasten upon us a new and more intolerable yoke of slavery. Thou wouldst have us put away that faith and worship, which our fathers, wiser, better, and braver men than we, always revered, and in which both they and we have found prosperity and happiness. Think, O king! of the great proof of love and affection we have given to thee in making thee our chieftain and lawgiver. That code of laws, which thou hast established with our consent in the assembly of the people, we will faithfully observe, and we will respect and obey thee as our king so long as the last man of us lives, provided thou askest nothing of us which is unlawful, and which we are bound to refuse. As to what thou now wouldst require of us, and insist upon with such obstinate zeal, as if thou wouldst constrain us by violence, know that we are all firmly resolved to abandon thee, and choose another king who will suffer us peacefully to enjoy our freedom, and that religion which is dear to our hearts."

The sentiments of the people found utterance in the voice of this speaker, and they manifested their approbation with tumultuous applause. So soon as silence could be restored, Sigurd Jarl stood forth, and explained to the multitude that it was not the wish and intention of the king to constrain them to change their religion, or to break the bonds of friendship which united him to a people who had given him such proofs of their affection. The assembly answered him with one voice, that it was their will that the king should offer for them the

accustomed solemn sacrifices for peace and for fruitful seasons, in the same manner as his forefathers had done. Sigurd persuaded the king to forego his purpose for the present, and the assembly was dismissed in peace. But as the season of annual sacrifice towards the beginning of winter approached, the minds of the people were again violently agitated, and they demanded that the king should preside on this solemn occasion, according to ancient custom, or should abdicate the throne. Sigurd Jarl endeavoured to assuage their angry passions, and promised, in the king's name, that he should be present at the feast, which always took place after the sacrifice. At this feast, Sigurd, who performed the duties of the pontifical office, in the king's place, took the drinking horn, which he had first consecrated to Odin, and offered it to the king. This was the critical moment when it seemed that Hakon must openly proclaim his choice between the new and the old religion. He endeavoured to evade the difficulty by consecrating anew the drinking horn with the sign of the cross, after which he drank in the usual manner. This movement was observed by the people, who began to show signs of anger, when Sigurd exclaimed that the king had but followed his example, since he had consecrated the horn to Thor, with the sign of the mallet, appropriate to that deity, which they had mistaken for the sign of the cross. With this ingenious explanation the people were readily satisfied, and Sigurd passed among them for 'the wisest man in Norway,' a reputation certainly merited, for the moderation and prudence with which he mediated between the king and people, preserving the confidence of both, whilst he still adhered sincerely to the national religion, without any fanatical spirit of hostility against the new

form of worship which Hakon was so anxious to introduce.

A secret confederacy was soon afterwards formed between eight of the most distinguished pontiff-chieftains of Norway against king Hakon and his religious innovations. They determined to destroy the Christian churches he had built in the northern parts of the country, and to compel him to renounce entirely his project of introducing Christianity into the kingdom. For this purpose four of the confederates sailed to the province of Mære, where there was a great temple, dedicated to the worship of Thor, and proceeded to burn the churches which had been erected in that vicinity. They also slew the Anglo-Saxon priests, whom Hakon had brought from England. The other four waited for the king at Mære, where a great religious festival was about to be held, with the intention of compelling Hakon to join without reserve in sacrificing to the ancient deities. The king came to the appointed place, accompanied by Sigurd Jarl and a retinue of his courtiers, whilst a great multitude of the neighbouring country people was gathered together, who menaced Hakon with open violence, if he should persist in refusing to assist at the sacrifice and the feast, by which it was to be followed. Constrained by the necessity of the case, and yielding to the entreaties and advice of Sigurd, he at last consented to eat of the liver of a horse, which had been sacrificed, and afterwards prepared for the feast, and to drain the drinking-horns, which they successively brought him, consecrated to Odin, and Thor, and Bragi, without substituting the sign of the cross, as he had before done in place of the heathen rites. But this constrained apostacy only inflamed his resentment against his country-

men, and he remained during the winter at Mære, brooding over his shame, and devising the means of punishing what he deemed an insolent act of rebellion against his authority.

The dismal prospect of a civil and religious war which was now impending over the kingdom was dissipated by the news of the arrival of the sons of Erik and Gunhilda, on the coasts with a powerful fleet, which Harald Blaatand, king of Denmark, had equipped, to aid them in recovering the crown of Norway. This foreign attack united all hearts in defence of their native land and national freedom. The patriot Sigurd persuaded even the confederated chieftains to unite their arms to those of Hakon in repelling this attempt to reestablish the family of Erik, who had been expelled by the general concurrence of the people. The Norwegian fleet obtained a signal victory over that of the exiled princes, who fled back to Denmark, where they found a constant refuge until the death of Hakon.

The rule of that prince was no longer interrupted by religious faction. Probably his own zeal for the new faith was cooled by time and habitual compliance with the external rites of paganism, or perhaps he became convinced by reflection and experience how impracticable it was to effect any forcible change in the national faith and worship. His mind must have fluctuated between the new and the old religion, for we read that he observed Sunday as a holy day, and constantly fasted on Friday. But the virtues of his character shone most conspicuously in his paternal government, and his anxiety for the welfare of his people, who were indebted to him for many excellent regulations. After this invasion from Denmark was thus repelled, Hakon revived, with

new sanctions, the ancient law, by which the whole territory of the kingdom was divided into a certain number of maritime districts, called *Skip-reidor*, which extended into the country as far up the rivers as the salmon ascended, each of which was bound to furnish a certain number of vessels and men for the common defence. To give effect to this regulation, stations were appointed on the principal mountains and heights of land along the coast, where signal fires were appointed to be lighted, in case of the approach of an enemy, and the alarm was thus given from the extremest northern point of Halgoland to the Naze of Norway.

Notwithstanding these wise precautions and the affec- 963.
tionate attachment of his countrymen, Hakon at last fell a victim to the insatiable ambition of Gunhilda and her sons. These princes again invaded the kingdom with a fleet equipped in Denmark. Hakon, who was taken by surprise in a remote part of the country, before he could collect his forces, was mortally wounded in the first onset of the enemy. Before his death, he sent messengers to his brother's sons, declaring them his successors in the kingdom, as he had no children, except one daughter, named Thora, and intreating them to spare his relations. "If a longer life shall be granted me," said the wounded king, "I will leave my kingdom and country, and retire into a Christian land to expiate my sins and confirm my faith. But if my fate be to die here, dispose of my body as you think meet." When his friends asked if he would not be sent to England for Christian burial, he answered: "As a heathen have I lived; as a heathen, and not as a Christian, must I be buried." His untimely fate was deeply lamented, both by friends and foes, and the epithet by

which his cotemporaries designated him as Hakon the Good, has been confirmed by the judgment of a milder and more enlightened age. His memory was celebrated in the songs of the Skalds, and especially in a lay, called the Hákonar-mál, composed by the celebrated Skald Eyvindr, which conducts Hakon in triumph into the heaven of Odin.*

Skogul and Gondul†
Odin sent,
kings to chuse
of Yngve's race
in Valhall
with Him to dwell.

Björn's brother‡
unmailed they saw—
(that sumptuous king!)
beneath his banner.
The storm of war begins!
Thick the rain of Odin falls
on foe-men's heads!
Swords clash on shields.

The Jarl-subduer
the isles had warned—
to the battle
his host had summoned.
The terror of the Dane
his eagle-crested helm
high reared before
his band of Northmen bold.

* Snorre, Saga Hákonar Góda, cap. xvii—xxxiii. Schöning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. ii. pp. 248, 370, 401, 408. Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. pp. 439—456.

† The *Valkyriur*, goddesses sent by Odin to direct the fate of battle.

‡ Hakon.

The Valkyriur hover over the field of battle, which is described in several strophes:—

Then Gondul spake
leaning on her lance:
"The assembly of the Gods
"with a mighty host is thronged,
"and Hakon's self,
"invited to their Home."

The King heard the words
the Valkyriur spake,
those Nymphs of War
sitting on their steeds
in anxious thought,
covered with their helms and shields.

HAKON.

"Why hast thou, O Skogul!
"thus turned the fight?
"We were worthy of victory from the Gods."

SKOGUL.

"To us thou owest
"that the field is thine,
"and thy foe-men fly."

* * * * *

"Now must we ride"
(said potent Skogul,)
"to the verdant home of the Gods
"to tell Odin
"that the mighty King
"is coming to visit Him."

ODIN.

" Hermódr* and Bragi"
(said the father of the Gods),
" fly to meet the King!
" For now Hakon,
" mightiest of warriors,
" seeks our hall."

Now stood the King
as he came from battle
all dripping with gore.

HAKON.

" Very grim and terrible
" appeareth Odin!
" How with pride he swells!"

BRAGI.

" Be welcome, King!
" into the society of Heroes,
" come—quaff ale with the Gods,
" Thou Jarl-subduer!
" Here eight brethren
" shalt thou find, before thee."

HAKON.

" We will keep our arms,"
(said the good King);
" the mail and helmet
" we will keep.
" 'Tis good to have
" the sword at hand."

* Odin's son and favourite messenger, who is represented with the attributes of Mercury.

Then was it seen how piously
the King had spared
the sacred temples,*
since the heavenly council
and all the Deities
bade Hakon welcome.

That King is born
in happy hour
who gains such favor
from the Gods.
The age wherein he lived
shall ever be held in honor.

Fenrir-the-Wolf,†
released from chains,
through the world shall range,
before a monarch so good
again shall tread
this vacant spot.

Riches perish;
friends die;
kingdoms are laid waste:
but Hakon dwells
with the Gods,
whilst many suffer much.‡

* That is, although a Christian, Hakon had not persecuted the Pagans.

† *Fenrir-úlfr*—the foul progeny of Loke, the evil principle, and the giantess *Angurbodi*, or one of the Jötnar, enemies of the beneficent deities, which monster, now bound in fetters, is to be let loose at the end of the present world, combat with the gods, and devour Odin himself.

‡ The Skald is supposed to allude to his own sufferings under Hakon's successor.

It belongs to poetry only to transfuse poetical thoughts and

language from one tongue to another. It would, however, be difficult to preserve the simplicity and inimitable harmony belonging to the original of this lay, which is justly regarded as one of the finest remains of the poetic art of the ancient North, in any version which would deserve the name of English poetry. The Editor has endeavoured to render it literally in the above version, which contains not a single idea or epithet, and scarcely a word, the equivalent of which will not be found in the original. The poetical translation of the Hon. W. Herbert (Miscellaneous Poetry, vol. i. p. 109.), is the nearest approach to the original which he has seen in English, but it can at most be regarded only as a successful imitation.

CHAPTER XIV.

William Long-Sword (Son of Rollo) second duke of Normandy.—His son Richard succeeds, and is aided by Harald Blaatand, king of Denmark, against Louis d'Outremer.—Harald Graafeld and the other sons of Gunilhda reign in Norway.—Hakon Jarl, son of Sigurd.—His relations with Harald Blaatand, king of Denmark.—Wars of the latter with the emperor Otho.—Republic of Vikingar at Jomsborg.—Joint expedition of the Jómsvíkingar and Danes against Hakon Jarl.—Spartan courage of the Jomsvikingar youth.—Reaction and triumph of heathenism in Norway under Hakon Jarl.—Life and adventures of Olaf Tryggvason.—His accession to the throne of Norway.—Death of Hakon Jarl.—Olaf converts Norway by fire and sword.—League against Olaf.—His death and character.

On the death of Rollo, the first duke of Normandy, he 931.
designated his son William Long-Sword as his successor, and the choice was confirmed by the approbation of the people. William possessed none of those great qualities which had enabled his father from being the fugitive leader of a band of Vikingar to become the founder of a powerful state. Having been educated by the monks, the successor of Rollo inclined rather to a life of monastic seclusion than to the exercise of the active virtues which could alone enable him to preserve what his heroic father had acquired. His want of spirit soon excited the discontent of his Norman subjects, who accused him of

partiality for the Franks. His marriage with the daughter of the Count of Senlis gave some colour to this accusation, and a confederacy of Norman seigneurs was formed, who sought to expel him from the duchy. For this purpose they marched upon Rouen, and duke William retired from the town with his troops to a lofty hill, from which he had a distinct view of the rebel army. The multitude of their forces filled him with consternation, and he would have fled to Senlis, to seek an asylum with the Count, but the severe reproofs of one of his chieftains, Bernard the Dane, saved him from this disgraceful course, and he determined to give battle to the rebels, who were completely defeated by the valour and conduct of Bernard.*

This victory confirmed the authority of William over the duchy of Normandy. His conspicuous rank among the great vassals of the French crown induced him to take part in their quarrels respecting the succession. The Carlovingian line was now drawing to an end; and Hugues, Count of Paris, might have grasped the vacant sceptre, but preferred, from reasons of policy, to raise to the throne Louis, the son of Charles the Simple. Charles had been deposed and imprisoned, and his queen Edgiva fled to England, to her father, Edward the Elder. On his death, Edgiva and her infant son Louis, surnamed Outremer, remained at the Anglo-Saxon court as the guests of king Athelstane.
926. An intercourse had been opened by Count Hugues with that monarch for the purpose of obtaining in marriage Ethilda, the sister of Athelstane. Splendid presents enforced the request. The wishes of Hugues were

* Depping, Histoire des Normands, tom. ii. pp. 145—152.

gratified, and he became the brother of Athelstane. Ten years afterwards, the Count of Paris sent an 936.
embassy to England to solicit queen Edgiva to return to France with her son Louis d'Outremer. With some reluctance, and after requiring hostages for her security, she complied with this invitation. The duke of Normandy took the oaths of fealty to the young prince, in common with the other great vassals of the crown; but he was faithless to his engagement, and subsequently joined Count Hugues in making war upon the last descendant of Charlemagne, whom they had themselves raised to the throne of his ancestors. But Louis having made a truce with Hugues, turned his arms against Normandy. William negotiated for peace with the king, and received from him a charter of confirmation of the duchy.*

William again manifested his disinclination for the cares of greatness, and his disposition for ascetic life, by proposing to enter the monastery of Jumièges which he had just rebuilt. The Norman seigneurs persuaded him to postpone the execution of this design, but he still continued to wear the girdle of the order, and designated his only son Richard as his successor. He sent Richard to Bayeux to be educated, because the Danish or ancient language of the North was there still retained, whilst the Romanz or French was the only language spoken at the ducal court at Rouen. William was soon afterwards treacherously assassinated at an interview with the Count of Flanders. His body was carried to Rouen for interment, and as he had announced his

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 152—154. Turner, History of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. pp. 68—71.

intention of becoming a monk, the clergy revered him as a martyr.

The young Richard was immediately acknowledged by the Norman seigneurs as their duke, and a regency, at the head of which was Bernard the Dane, was appointed to adminster the affairs of the duchy during his minority. Louis d'Outremer, who had come to Rouen to receive the homage of the regents acting in the name of the young duke, expressed a desire to educate him at his own court, with which the Normans reluctantly complied, as they were, not without reason, suspicious of the designs of the king. Richard was carried to the French court at Laon, a strongly fortified place, from which he would probably never have escaped but for the subtle contrivance of his tutor Osmund, who persuaded the young duke to feign sickness on a certain day, when a court festival delivered him from the presence of the spies whom Louis had set over him. Osmund, disguised as a muleteer, carried off Richard in a bundle of hay, and having disposed relays of horses on the road, arrived safely with his ward at the castle of Coucy, belonging to the Count of Senlis, uncle to the Duke.

Louis, being thus foiled in his designs upon the person of the only living descendant of duke Rollo, threw off the mask, and entered into a treaty with the Counts of Flanders and Paris, to subdue and partition the province of Normandy. Their troops entered the country, and took possession of the towns. Under these circumstances, Bernard the Dane had recourse to a measure which savours of the refinement of more modern policy. Whilst he secretly sent envoys to solicit aid in Denmark, he tendered the homage of the Normans to Louis, insinuating to the short-sighted monarch that his

countrymen would prefer that the province should be reunited to the crown of France rather than to see any portion of it divided among the king's vassals. Upon this suggestion, Louis ordered the Count of Paris to withdraw his troops from Normandy, and began to parcel out the principal fiefs among his own favorite courtiers. Count Hugues, stung with this faithless conduct of the king, determined to revenge himself by aiding the Normans in expelling Louis from their country. At 944.
this conjuncture, Harald Blaatand, king of Denmark, appeared off Cherbourg with the succours which Bernard had solicited from the parent country. The Norman barons immediately flocked to his standard, and his small force was soon swelled to a formidable army.

A new faction had just started up in Normandy, headed by one Thormod, who having himself relapsed into paganism, wished to constrain Richard and the other Normans to abjure the religion of the Franks. But Thormod having been slain in a fight against the troops of Louis, and his party dispersed, the king was left to contend only with the Normans under the command of Harald. The two kings had an interview on the banks of the Dive, at which a quarrel broke out between some of their followers, and a general battle took place, in which Louis was taken prisoner by the Normans. He did not recover his liberty until he had solemnly sworn to renounce for ever his pretensions upon Normandy. It is to this circumstance that William the Conqueror alludes in his speech to his army before the battle of Hastings,—'Did not your fathers make captive the king of the Franks, and hold him as a prisoner in Rouen until he had restored Normandy to Richard, your duke, then a boy? and in that

interview, did not the young duke wear his sword, whilst the king was deprived of his, and even of his dagger?'*

963. On the death of king Hakon, his brother, Harald II, surnamed Graafeld, succeeded to the nominal sceptre of the kingdom which had been founded by Harald Hárfager. But such was the loosely compacted machinery of society in that barbarous age and country, that not only was the regal authority shared by him with his brothers, the sons of Erik and Gunilhda, but two other chieftains ruled with independent authority their respective local districts. Tryggve and Gudröd, the grandsons of Harald I, governed separate tribes; the one in the south-east part of Norway, the other in Westfold, whilst Sigurd Jarl remained the independent chieftain of Drontheim. The ambitious and intriguing Gunilhda stimulated her sons to compass the destruction of Sigurd Jarl, as a first step towards securing the
965. entire monarchy of Norway to her family. Sigurd was surprised by his enemies, having been betrayed by his own brothers, and barbarously burnt alive in the house in which he was feasting. The indignant people of Drontheim elected his son Hakon to succeed him. A civil war broke out between the rival princes, and after many bloody conflicts, a perpetual truce was at last concluded, by the terms of which Hakon Jarl was to rule over the country which had been held by his father Sigurd, whilst the brother kings continued to reign over the other dominions possessed by king Hakon the Good. Tryggve and Gudröd, the descendants of Harald

* Depping, tom. ii. pp. 155—167. Pièces Justificatives, pp. 323—334. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. iii. pp. 13—34.

Hárfager, had already fallen victims to the machinations of Gunilhda and her sons. Astrida, the widow of Tryggve fled with her infant son Olaf to Sweden. Harald Grænske, son of Gudröd, also found an asylum in the same country.*

The peace between the competitors for power in Norway was of short duration. Hakon Jarl sought the 977.
aid of Harald Blaatand, king of Denmark, against Gunilhda and her sons. Harald Graafeld perished in a plot contrived by Hakon, and the Danish monarch invaded Norway with a powerful fleet, subdued the country, and was acknowledged by the people as their king. Harald Blaatand invested Hakon Jarl with a 978.
portion of the conquered territory, as his vassal, upon condition that the Jarl should render to the king an annual tribute of fifty marks of gold and sixty falcons. He divided the rest of the country between his own son Svend, and the Norwegian prince Harald Grænske, reserving his own authority as the paramount sovereign of all Norway.†

Hakon Jarl soon manifested a disposition to assert his independence of the ally who had contributed to deliver him from his rivals and enemies, the sons of Gunilhda. He exacted a tribute from the Norwegian colonies in the Scottish isles, and endeavoured by every art of popularity to extend his influence in the mother country. The crafty Jarl was not, however, yet prepared to avow his

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap. x.—xv. Schœning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. iii. pp. 4—42.

† Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap x.—xv. Schœning, Norges Riges Historie, tom. iii. pp. 42—108.

designs, and did not hesitate to fly to the assistance of his liege lord, when summoned by Harald Blaatand to his aid against an invasion with which Denmark was
989. threatened from the emperor Otho III, of the Saxon line. Hakon was present at an obstinate battle, fought between the Danes and the Imperial army, consisting of Saxons, Franks, and Frisians, at the famous rampart of the *Dannewirke*, in Sleswick, originally constructed in the time of Charlemagne. This rampart, which had been recently repaired by Harald, is described by Snorre Sturleson as covering the narrow neck of land between the two friths or bays, which penetrate the country from the East and North Seas. The isthmus thus formed was defended by an immense mound, constructed of earth, stones, and trees, garnished with lofty towers at short intervals, and a deep ditch on the south side throughout, with a single gate in the centre, protected by a strong castle. The first attempt of the emperor to penetrate into Jutland was baffled, but he returned again and was again repulsed in battle, but ultimately succeeded in burning the Dannewirke, and thus overrun the flat country before Harald could rally his troops. Otho concluded a peace with Harald, the principal condition of which was that the Danish people should embrace Christianity, and their king should endeavour to introduce the new religion into Norway. For this purpose Harald constrained Hakon Jarl and his followers to submit to the ceremony of baptism. The king also persuaded Hakon to take on board his fleet some Christian priests, to attempt the conversion of Norway. But the Jarl took advantage of a favorable wind to escape through the Sound, where he set the Christian mis-

sionaries on shore, and afterwards sailed to the coasts of Gothland. Here he landed, and offered a great sacrifice to propitiate the anger of the gods at his apostacy, demanding their counsel as to his future course. The flight of two ravens, the birds of Odin, which passed over his head at the moment, was interpreted by him as a favourable omen. He accordingly set fire to his ships, and pursuing his way through Sweden, encountered in his passage the Jarl of Gothland, whom he slew, laid waste the country with fire and sword, and returned through the interior to Norway. Hakon then advanced to the port where the Danish squadron was stationed, which had been sent with other missionaries to attempt the conversion of Norway; but the Danes having received an intimation of his design, escaped to their own country.*

From this time Harald and Hakon became open enemies. The latter refused any longer to pay tribute, and declared himself independent, but without assuming the title of king. Harald soon afterwards fell a victim to the unnatural rebellion of his son Svend, who sought a refuge among the inhabitants of the celebrated piratical republic of Julin or Jomsborg. On this occasion, Harald is said to have found an asylum with duke Richard of Normandy, to whom he had before rendered such signal services, and who contributed to restore the exiled monarch to his crown and country. But Harald 991
was again attacked by his rebellious son with his Vandal confederates, and was overtaken in a thick wood in Zealand, where he was shot by an arrow, from the bow of

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Sini, cap. xxiv—xxviii. Suhm, H. af D. tom. iii. pp. 188—194.

Palnatoke, the famous founder of that commonwealth of sea-rovers.*

The city and state of Julin or Jomsborg was situate in Pomerania, in the present island of Wollin, which is formed by the mouths of the Oder as it empties into the Baltic sea. It was taken possession of and fortified by an association of Danish sea-rovers, in the reign of Harald Blaatand. This nest of pirates was afterwards joined by other Swedish, Norwegian, Vend, and Vandal adventurers, and Palnatoke undertook the task of legislating for this singular community. This law-giver formed his republic upon a Spartan model, exalting the virtues of courage and contempt of death above all other qualities, and exacting implicit obedience to the orders of their chieftain as the sole rule of conduct. In order to be admitted into this society, from which women were absolutely excluded, it was necessary for the young warrior to prove, by witnesses, that he had never refused to accept a challenge, and to take a solemn oath that he

* Suhm, H. af D., tom. iii. pp. 200—204. It is remarkable that the exact counterpart of the story of William Tell shooting the apple off his son's head, at the command of Gesler, is told by Saxo-Grammaticus, who wrote a century before the revolt of the Swiss, of Palnatoke and king Harald Blaatand. (Suhm, p. 200.) The authenticity of the story of William Tell has been called in question, upon the ground of its coincidence with the Danish legend; but it is successfully vindicated by the celebrated Swiss historian, John de Müller, by the concurrent testimony of old traditions, chronicles, and lays, supported by the decree of the Canton of Uri establishing the chapel of Tell in 1388, at which assembly there were present more than one hundred persons who had known the hero. (Geschichte der Schweitz, tom. i. p. 645. Note.) Œlenschlæger has made the Danish story the subject of his fine tragedy of *Palnetoke*.

would bring no woman into the city. He also promised to avenge the death of his associates; to reveal to the chieftain alone any secret concerning the common welfare; never to manifest the least sign of fear in battle, or to ask for quarter; nor to absent himself from the city for more than three days, without permission of the chieftain. The booty taken in their sea-roving expeditions was brought into common stock, and distributed at the discretion of the chieftain. It may easily be imagined what must have been the effect of such institutions, grafted upon the ferocious manners of the Northern nations in the tenth century. Accordingly the republic of Jomsborg continued to flourish, if such an expression can be applied to a society of robbers, or rather it continued to be the scourge of all the neighbouring countries, with some interruptions, until the latter part of the twelfth century, when it was finally extirpated by Valdemar I.*

Soon after the accession of Svend to the throne of Denmark, vacated by the death of his father Harald, he undertook, conjointly with the Jómsvíkingar, an expedition against Hakon Jarl of Norway. This expedition was commanded by Sigvard Jarl, the chieftain of Jomsborg, and the enemy's fleet was encountered by Hakon 994.

* The obscure history of this remarkable community has been recently illustrated by the critical labours of Professor Wedel-Simonsen, in a Disquisition contained in his valuable Udsigt over National Historiens aeldste og mærkaligste Periode, Copenhagen, 1813, tom. ii. part i. The original authority for this history is *Jómsvíkingasaga*, a correct and beautiful edition of which has recently been published by the Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen under the special superintendance of Professor Rask, and translated into Danish by Professor Rafn.

in the bay of Bergen. The battle was long and sharply contested. During one of the intervals, whilst the combatants reposed from the bloody strife, Hakon retired to a neighbouring island, there to consult his tutelary deity or family goddess Thorgerda Hörgabrúd, a magician of old, from whom the Jarl himself was lineally descended. He interrogated the mysterious oracle with great solemnity, prostrating himself on the ground, and turning his face to the north. The Jarl offered to the goddess the accustomed offerings, but she refused to listen to his prayers, until he proposed to sacrifice his son Erling, a youth of seven years old. To this offer the goddess gave ear, and promised him the victory, and the stern father is said to have sacrificed accordingly his beloved son on the bloody altars of this black superstition, by the hands of one of his slaves. He then bore the favorable response to his companions and followers, and thus infused fresh vigour into their desponding hearts. Both the Norwegians and the Danes fancied they saw the awful form of the goddess herself appear on the dark clouds, dashing hail or snow against the Jómsvíkingar, and fighting on the side of the Norwegians. The Jómsvíkingar were entirely routed, and many who escaped the sword perished in the waves. The survivors, who disdained to fly, amounting to seventy in number, were brought before the triumphant Jarl, who ordered their heads to be struck off in his own presence, that he might see whether their boasted fortitude would desert them on this trying occasion. The first who presented his head to the fatal axe, exclaimed, 'Why should I seek to escape from the fate which has befallen my father? He is dead, I, too, must die!' Another desired the executioner to strike him with the sword directly in the fore-

head, in order to observe whether he would wink his eyes when he received the deadly blow. The next was a youthful warrior, of an interesting figure, whose fair locks floated in ringlets upon his manly shoulders. Being asked what he thought of death, he answered, 'I fear it not, and do not desire to live, since I must survive my brave companions. But I will not be led like a lamb to the slaughter:—All that I ask is, that no slave shall touch my locks, and that they shall not be defiled with my blood, but that one of these Jarls, noble courtiers, will hold them back with his hands from my neck.' One of Hakon's attendants accordingly grasped the hair in his hands, and held it up, standing before him; but as the axe was about to descend on the prisoner's neck, he suddenly drew back his head, so that the executioner cut off both the courtier's hands instead of the prisoner's head, who exclaimed, tauntingly, 'Who of the boys has his hands dangling in my head?' Erik Jarl, the son of Hakon, immediately ran to the youth, and enquired his name and family. He answered, 'my name is Sigurd, they call me the son of Bue. Not all the Jómsvíkingar are yet dead!' The dauntless and intrepid bearing of this young warrior moved Erik to intercede for his pardon.

The next prisoner to be killed was the famous young Champion, Vagn, the grandson of Palnatoke. When asked how he liked to die, he answered in a manner that enraged the executioner, who was an officer of considerable rank in the Norwegian army, and aimed at him a most furious blow. But the prisoner who was the next in the line or cord with which they were all fastened together, with their hands tied behind their backs, and whose name was Björn, 'the Welshman,' pushed Vagn

with his foot away from the blow, in such a manner that the executioner, missing his aim, fell to the ground, and his sword cut asunder the cord with which Vagn was tied. Vagn immediately seized the sword, and struck off the executioner's head. Hakon Jarl gave orders to kill that dangerous fellow instantly, but his son Erik prevented it, by asking whether he would not accept quarter, but he answered that he would not, unless all his comrades then alive should be spared. Erik, with some difficulty, obtained this favor from his father. Ten or eleven of the prisoners had already been put to death.*

Hakon Jarl was soon afterwards delivered, by the death of Harald Grænske, from the last competitor to the possession of the supreme power of Norway. The reign of Hakon was the epoch of the triumph and reaction of the heathen superstition in that country. He was a zealous and fanatic votary of the ancient deities. Under his rule the temples were rebuilt, and the accustomed sacrifices renewed. The country had been afflicted with a desolating famine, but peace and plenty were restored under the administration of Hakon, which the people did not fail to attribute to the favour of the gods, who had been propitiated by the restoration of their ancient worship. Hakon even acquired from his grateful subjects the epithet of Good, which had been conferred upon his predecessor, king Hakon. But from his subsequent conduct, his memory was stigmatized after his death by the adverse party, and the subsequent triumph and ascendancy of the new religion confirmed the epithet

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap. xxxix.—xlvi. Jómsvíkinga Saga, Müller's Sagabibliothek, tom. iii. p. 73—94.

of Bad, which the enraged people finally associated with his detested name. It is certain, that like most of the pontiff-chieftains of the heroic age, Hakon was distinguished for craft and cruelty towards his enemies, and at the same time, for his courage and conduct in war, as well as boundless liberality and munificence towards his faithful friends and adherents. But no beneficent institutions, like the laws of king Hakon the Good, and no enlarged views of social improvement, like those of Harald I, marked his wild and violent career, though, in other respects, not destitute of certain traits of heroic bearing and barbaric grandeur. He at length excited the resentment of his countrymen, by the excessive indulgence of his licentious passions, at the expense of the honour of their wives and daughters—the last indignity to which even a people fashioned to servitude will submit with patience, and which roused the free-born chieftains of Norway to take arms against the tyranny of Hakon.*

The final catastrophe of his eventful life is closely linked with the romantic story of Olaf Tryggvason. Olaf's father, Tryggve, having fallen a victim to the 969.
artifices of the fury Gunilhda and her sons, his widow, then pregnant with the infant prince, fled to a sequestered island in a lake, where Olaf was born. Astrida for some time found an asylum in the hall of a Swedish Jarl, but her apprehensions least she should be overtaken by the vengeance of Gunilhda, induced her to seek a more distant retreat in Garderike, or Russia, where Sigurd, one of her near kinsmen, had risen to great distinction. The

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap. xvi. xxviii. l.—lvi. Münter, Kirchengeschichte von Dännemark und Norwegen, tom. i. pp. 456—463.

fugitives fell into the hands of pirates, by whom Olaf was sold, and afterwards ransomed by Sigurd, and carried to the court of the Russian prince Wladimir, at Novogorod. Here he distinguished himself for his proficiency in all manly exercises and courtly arts, as they were practised in that age and country, by which he won the favour of the Russian princess, Wladimir's wife, and at the same time excited the jealousy of the other courtiers. After residing for nine years at the Russian court, Olaf left it in the nineteenth year of his age, and cruized in the Baltic sea as a Vikingr. He afterwards espoused the daughter of a Vend prince, and with his father-in-law joined the final expedition of the emperor Otho, against Denmark. He returned to his wife's country, where he remained three years, and on her death, resumed his sea-roving life. He cruized for several years on the coasts of England, Scotland, Ireland, and France, and on his arrival at Scilly, was converted to Christianity, by a solitary monk or hermit, in that remote and sequestered island. But he had probably acquired some notions of the Christian religion, as it was understood and practised in those barbarous times, in Russia, and both the English and Norman chronicles assure us that he was solemnly baptized at London, and at Rouen in Normandy.* Probably, like most of the Northern adventurers of that age, he might not be unwilling to give repeated proofs, in different countries and at different times, of his determination to renounce the errors of Paganism.*

The fame of the exploits of Olaf Tryggvason reached

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap. i.—vii. xxi.—xxvi. xxx.—xxxii.

the ear of the tyrant of Norway, who heard with terror that there was a youthful hero, of the race of Harald Hárfager, still surviving, who might challenge his claim to the Norwegian sceptre. Hakon sent one of his subtlest agents, Thorer Klacka, to Dublin, in Ireland, where Olaf had married a Northman princess of that country, to discover and circumvent him with artful wiles. Thorer, who had before visited Ireland, both as a merchant and a sea-rover, presented himself to Olaf as one of the victims of Hakon's tyranny, and represented that his countrymen would receive, with open arms, the descendant of their ancient princes, as a deliverer from a yoke which had become insupportable. Encouraged by these solicitations, Olaf set sail for Norway, accompanied by his pretended friend Thorer. On their arrival in that country, they found that the greater part of the chieftains and people had actually risen in arms against Hakon. Thorer was confounded at finding what he had deceitfully represented to Olaf, actually realized during his absence. He endeavoured in vain to find out Hakon, who had fled before the rising storm, and sought a refuge in a distant part of the country, with a woman of illustrious birth, named Thora, who had been one of his concubines, and who provided him a hiding place in a secret grotto, where he remained concealed from his enemies. In the mean time, Thorer returned to the ship, and advised Olaf to land, and take advantage of the disposition of the people in his favor, intending, however, to lead him into an ambush, and thus consummate his treachery by slaying the young prince. But Olaf anticipated the designs of Thorer, and caused him to be put to death before he could accomplish his intentions. There was now a general rising of the Nor-

wegians against Hakon, who was assassinated by one of his own slaves. The bloody head of his enemy was brought to Olaf, who commanded the slave to be instantly put to death. Both their heads were then fixed up at the place of execution for common malefactors, and exposed to the gaze of the multitude, who expressed their hate by covering them with a shower of stones.*

The people of Norway immediately elected Olaf to fill the vacant throne. He was recommended to their choice, not only by his birth, being a lineal descendant of Harald I, and what was scarcely of less importance with the Northern nations, by his manly beauty; but also by his heroic spirit, valour, and reputation for wisdom and knowledge acquired in foreign lands. The first measure undertaken by the young monarch, was the establishment of Christianity in Norway. With this view, he submitted his conscience to the guidance of one Sigurd, probably a recently converted heathen, who was wholly unscrupulous as to the means to be used for the accomplishment of this holy purpose. Olaf marched through the country, accompanied by his priests and his Bersærker, proffering honors and rewards to those who would submit to the ceremony of Christian baptism, alarming the superstition of the vulgar with pretended visions and miracles, and menacing the contumacious with cruel and bloody vengeance. In the southern part of Norway, the people were induced, by these means, to accept the new religion in their public national assembly of the *All-thing:* But in the extreme North, the power of ancient prejudice obstinately resisted his per-

* Snorre, cap. li.—lvi.

suasions. Several of the Pagan chieftains were exiled, others were ignominiously put to death as a punishment for the crime of idolatry. The pagan temples and idols were everywhere destroyed by the furious zeal of the king, who showed as much courage in this crusade as he had ever manifested in any of the most romantic adventures of his eventful life. Having assembled the people in a provincial *Thing* at Frosta, he proposed to them the abolition of the ancient religion. This proposal was received by them with indignation. They had recourse to arms, and threatened the life of Olaf if he should persevere in his intentions. But his presence of mind did not desert him, and having secured the persons of some of the leading chieftains, he adjourned the assembly to the isle of Mære. Here was situate the famous temple of Thor, the tutelary deity of Norway. The pontiff-chieftain of this district engaged in a dispute with Olaf on the subject of religion, in which he took some liberties with the Christian name, which kindled the wrath of the king to that degree, that he darted his lance at the statue of Thor, which fell to the ground, whilst his Champions and Bersærker immediately attacked the chieftain, and put him to death. The people, struck with consternation at the overthrow of the idol, complied with the wishes of the king. In order to atone for the murder of Jarnskegg, Olaf consented to espouse his daughter Gudruna, but separated from her the next day after their nuptials, because she had attempted to poignard him in the night!

Under the impulse of this blind zeal, Olaf joined treachery to cruelty as one of the means of propagating the true faith. He invited a descendant of Harald Hárfager, named Eyvind Kelda, who was the chief of an

association of magicians (perhaps adherents to the anti-Odinian or Finnish religion), to a festival with his brethren, and not being able to persuade these obstinate pagans to abjure their odious practices, caused the house in which they were assembled to be set on fire. All the guests were consumed except Eyvind, who, fortunately, made his escape, but was afterwards retaken and exposed, bound on a low rock in the sea, to be drowned by high water. Other pagans were tortured in the most cruel manner, and this persecution produced the usual effects of conversion compelled by force. Many of the pretended converts relapsed into their idolatrous practices, and retired into the inaccessible fastnesses of the stupendous ranges of the Norwegian Alps, there to adore, in 'temples not made with hands,' the gods of their fathers. Even to this day the remnants of the ancient popular faith still linger in these Northern forests and glens, in a thousand forms of fantastic superstition, peopling the woods and waters, and even the subterraneous regions of the earth, with good and evil genii, fairies and elves, mountain-demons, river-demons, forest-demons, and mine-demons.

The fame of Olaf was now spread far and wide in all the countries of the North, and when he demanded the hand of Sigrid the Proud, a Swedish princess, who had rejected with disdain many a suitor of kingly birth, his overtures were favorably received. A treaty of marriage was about to be concluded between them, when it was broken off upon the point of religion, the king insisting that Sigrid should renounce the errors of Paganism. The haughty princess rejected this proposal with disdain. 'I will not forsake the old worship of my fathers for any new faith, but that does not hinder you from

believing in such gods as you think fit.' To which Olaf answered, in most uncourteous terms, that he would 'not consent to live with an old heathen hag,' and being greatly incensed, struck his proud mistress with his glove. The insulted princess broke off this strange courtship, and predicted to Olaf that this outrage should cost him his throne and his life.

This prediction was soon fulfilled. Sigrid became the wife of the Danish king Svend. This prince had a sister named Thyra, who was espoused to the same Vendish prince whose daughter Olaf had formerly married. Thyra became dissatisfied with her husband, and not daring to return to Denmark, sought a refuge in Norway. Here the rejected suitor of Sigurd immediately married her without the consent of her brother, the king of Denmark, and in violation of the most sacred precepts of that religion he was so anxious to impose on others with fire and sword. Sigrid painted his conduct in the blackest colours to her husband, the Danish monarch. Some jealousy already existed between the two kings, and Svend lent a willing ear to the suggestions of his revengeful queen. King Olaf undertook an expedition to Venden (Pomerania), in order to reclaim the dowry and other property of his queen, left by her when she fled from that country. This expedition, which must necessarily pass through the seas, over which the kings of Denmark claimed, even at that early day, a territorial jurisdiction, having been undertaken without asking the consent of Svend, afforded a pretext for his hostility. To give effect to her machinations, Sigrid employed the agency of Sigvald Jarl, then chieftain of the piratical republic of Jomsborg. The subtle and intriguing Jarl formed a confederacy against the Nor- 1000.

wegian monarch, in which he engaged the king of Sweden, together with Erik, son of Hakon Jarl. Sigvald went to the place where the Norwegian fleet lay in Venden, where he entered into an insidious negociation with the unsuspecting Olaf, in order to induce him to delay setting sail on his return to Norway, until the three allied princes had combined their fleets. In the mean time, the fear of the imposing force Olaf had brought with him, constrained the prince of the Vends to conclude an amicable arrangement of their controversy. The kings of Denmark and Sweden had already armed for the purpose of executing their hostile designs against Olaf, and Erik Jarl, who had taken refuge in Sweden, availed himself of this opportunity to attempt the recovery of his patrimony in Norway. The rumour of these preparations reached the ear of Olaf in Venden, but his suspicions were lulled to sleep by the artful protestations of Sigvald Jarl, who represented that there was nothing to be apprehended from that quarter, and even carried his falsehood and perfidy so far as to offer the aid of his own valiant Jómsvíkingar, in case of a sudden attack. Olaf at length resolved to return with his fleet to Norway, and the treacherous Jarl, who had undertaken to lead the van, and to pilot the king through the passages between the small islands which lay along the coast, conducted him into the midst of the enemy. Olaf had no sooner reached the isle of Swoldur, near the present city of Stralsund, than he descried the enemy's vessels, which were at first concealed by the islands. The foremost division of the king's fleet, which formed the greater part of his effective force, had already reached the main sea, perhaps through other passages, none of the vessels at least observing any danger or

enemy. The friends of Olaf advised him to hasten to reach his main fleet, but he indignantly rejected their counsel, declaring that he had never yet turned his back upon an enemy, and should scorn to save his life by flight. The king took his stand upon the lofty stern of his gallant ship, called the *Long-Serpent*, the largest and finest vessel which had ever been seen in the North, from which he could observe and direct every movement of the fight. As he descried the different divisions of the enemy's fleet, he called out to his companions with a loud and animated voice: 'These Danes have never yet vanquished us, nor will they this day have cause to boast their prowess. As for the Swedes, better for them would it have been to have staid at home, devouring the mangled carcases of their bloody heathen sacrifices, than to come here to hack their swords against our invincible Serpent. But farther off, I see the ships of Erik Jarl: it is they alone who are to be dreaded, for they as well as ourselves, are Norwegians!' The contest was too unequal to be long maintained by Olaf, whose ship was soon surrounded by the overwhelming force of the enemy, who attempted to take it by boarding. But Erik Jarl, finding that his boarders could not reach the deck of the huge Serpent, which lay like a castle upon the water, went on shore and cut down tall trees, which he placed with one end in his own vessel, and the other on board of Olaf's Serpent, which thus sunk down on its side, and was taken by boarding. Erik Jarl, at the same time, made a solemn vow to become a Christian, if he should obtain the victory. Einar, an expert archer on board Olaf's ship, twice aimed his well directed arrows at Erik, and had put a third arrow to his bow, which probably would have

proved fatal, and turned the fortune of the day, when the string was struck by a broad-pointed missile, and broke with a loud noise. 'What brake?' said Olaf, who heard the sound. 'Norway from thy hands,' exclaimed Einar. King Olaf was angered, and replied, 'That must God decide, not thy bow!' But the odds was too fearful, and Olaf being himself wounded, and the greater part of his Champions slain, threw himself into the sea, and perished with the remainder of his faithful friends.*

Thus fell Olaf Tryggvason, according to Snorre, the most distinguished prince of his times, in all those qualities which attracted the esteem and admiration of men in that age of the world. His bodily strength exceeded that of most men of his time, and he was eminently skilled in all manly arts and exercises—swimming, rowing, hunting, and the use of arms. His natural temper was mild and gentle, courteous, cheerful, and inclined to the indulgence of social pleasures. His taste in dress and living was showy and magnificent. His eloquence in discourse, and exceeding valour, fortitude, and skill in war, especially in naval enterprizes, eclipsed the fame of the most illustrious heroes of the ancient North. His kindness and generosity to his friends was only equalled by his fierce cruelty to his enemies, and especially those who were at the same time enemies to the Christian faith—persecuting them with fire and sword, mutilating

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi Tryggva Syni, cap. lxvi, xciv, xcv, cii, cxxxi. Some suppose, however, that he escaped by swimming, and went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he died in a monastery. The different relations tending to make this credible, are carefully collected in Olaf's Tryggvasonar Saga, recently published by the society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen.

them with cruel tortures, and casting their mangled limbs to the ravenous beasts of prey. Hence he was as much hated and dreaded by his foes, as beloved and esteemed by his friends, and the success of his designs was proportioned to the active zeal with which the latter lent their co-operation, whilst the former were intimidated by fear from making any effectual resistance to his will.*

Olaf's taste for the liberal and useful arts had been improved by his widely extended travels, both in the East and the West. He admired, and liberally rewarded the poetry of the Skalds, although its connexion with the ancient faith would seem naturally adapted to excite his prejudices against this favourite national art. Olaf greatly encouraged ship-building; and the advantages of commerce and civilization, which he had seen strikingly exemplified in the countries of the East, which he had visited during his youth, induced him to become the founder of a city, at the mouth of the river Nid, called, from its position, Nidarôs, which might serve as a commercial staple and granary for that part of Norway, so often exposed to the scourge of famine. The city thus founded by him was afterwards called Drontheim, from the name of the province of which it is still the capital.†

The romantic incidents in the eventful life of this monarch gave rise to a tradition long cherished by his countrymen, similar to the famous Portuguese legend of Don Sebastian. Like the kingly hero of Portugal, Olaf is said to have disappeared in the midst of a battle,

* Snorre, cap. xcii. † Snorre, cap. lxxvii.

and never returned to his own country. But, according to the legend recorded by his biographers, Gunnlaug and Oddur, the king saved his life by swimming, proceeded in the disguise of a palmer to Rome and the Holy Land, and afterwards became an anchorite in Syria, where he was still living in the reign of Magnus the Good, his fourth successor in the throne of Norway.*

On the death or disappearance of Olaf Tryggvason, his dominions became the spoil of the confederated victors. The kings of Denmark and Sweden took to themselves such portions of territory as suited their convenience, and left the rest to the sons of Hakon Jarl, Erik, and Svend. The latter chieftains endeavoured to obliterate from the minds of their countrymen the recollection of the violent means by which they had attained to power, by exercising it in the mildest and gentlest form. They professed Christianity in compliance with the solemn vow they had made, in order to

* Gunnlaúg and Oddur, two Icelandic monks, who lived in the twelfth century, wrote each a separate Saga or life of Olaf Tryggvason. These Sagas were used by Snorre, among other original sources, in the compilation of this part of Heimskringla. He may have shown his superior discretion in not recording the story of the survival of Olaf, but there is not a single fact connected with that supposed event, which is set down by the king's other biographers, without stating the names of the Northern pilgrims, who related these accounts, with the presents or messages he sent home to Norway, and some of these witnesses were men of the very first rank in Norway and Iceland. Even the miracles related may be referred to the facility of belief in such prodigies in that age, or they may have consisted in some natural artifice, which produced an illusion on the ignorant and superstitious multitude.

purchase their triumph over Olaf; but they refused to persecute the adherents of the ancient national religion, leaving to all men the free exercise of their peculiar faith,—a course of policy which has ever been found most favourable to the public tranquillity and to the progress of truth.*

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. p. 497.

CHAPTER XV.

Svend Haraldson, king of Denmark.—Renewal of the Northern invasions of England. — Ethelred the Unready. — Death of Svend.—His son Canute succeeds him.—Causes of the decline of the Anglo-Saxon race.—Conquest of England by Canute.—His legislation.—Pilgrimage to Rome.—Assassination of Ulfr Jarl.—State of Christianity in Denmark.—St Olaf, king of Norway.—Conquest of Norway by Canute.—Exile, return, and death of Olaf.

THE life and reign of Svend Haraldson, surnamed Otto, from the German emperor of that name, and *Tveskæg*, from his forked beard, was diversified by those romantic incidents, singularly wild adventures, and almost incredible turns of fortune, which mark the story of the Northern chieftains of the heroic age. In his early life, he was a sea-rover, and plundered the coasts of England. We have seen him a rebel and outlaw, uniting with the pirates of Jomsborg in parricidal rebellion and war against his royal father. He was more than once taken prisoner by the same Jómsvíkingar, and often ransomed and restored to the throne. He subsequently warred with the Swedish king Erik Sejer, who invaded Scania, and after a desperate struggle expelled him from the Danish isles. The exiled monarch then became a fugitive wanderer, humbly soliciting aid from the kings of Norway, England,

and Scotland. On the death of his rival, he again returned to Denmark, but was once more driven out by the son of Erik, who ultimately restored him, and their friendship was cemented by the marriage of Svend with the mother of the Swedish monarch.*

England had now enjoyed nearly a century's respite from the harassing and cruel invasions of the Northmen. But the Anglo-Saxon monarchy and nation had gradually declined from the termination of the vigorous reign of Athelstane to that of Ethelred, most appropriately surnamed 'the Unready.' His reign was the epoch of the renewed incursions of the Danes and Norwegians upon the coasts of the kingdom. In 991, they made an attack upon the eastern coast, which was at first repelled by the valour of Brithnoth, alderman of Northumberland, whose heroic death is celebrated in one of those Anglo-Saxon lays which form a part of the few remaining relics of the poetical literature of our remote ancestors.†

This was one of the last convulsive signs of life given by that once courageous race, before their entire subjugation by the Danes. A few years afterwards, the kings 994.
of Denmark and Norway, Svend (called Sweyne, or Sweno, by the English historians) and Olaf Tryggvason, undertook a predatory expedition against England. They entered the Thames, and though they were repelled in their attack upon London, were finally bought off by a heavy tribute exacted from an oppressed and ruined nation. Olaf was invited to the court of

* Turner, vol. iii. p. 201.

† Conybeare's Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry, Introd. Essay, p. lxxxvii.

Ethelred, where he received rich presents and the Christian rite of confirmation, in return for which he solemnly promised never more to invade the kingdom.

But the Danish king had made no such promise, and after a truce of three years again commenced his ravages. They were afterwards suspended by his feud with Olaf Tryggvason, the issue of which has already been told. A measure, as useless and impolitic as it was cowardly and cruel, which had been ordained by Ethelred, now brought upon England the accumulated vengeance of
1002. the Danish monarch. All the Danes, throughout England, together with their wives and children, including Gunilhda, the sister of Svend, who was married to a Saxon thane, were massacred in a single day. The only pretext for this wicked act is to be sought for in the perverse policy of the kings of Wessex, who since the reign of Athelstane had been accustomed to engage the mercenary services of military adventurers from Denmark, Norway, and Iceland, as household troops or body-guards. These bands of Vikingar and Bersærker were sometimes quartered upon the Saxon thanes and Franklins. Their licentious insolence may have provoked the national vengeance, or these intruders may have treacherously conspired against the Saxon princes, to whom they had sold their allegiance. But such a suspicion can afford no excuse for an indiscriminate and bloody massacre, and the 'murder of St Brice's day' was long remembered by the Normans and Danes as a fresh incentive to their inveterate hatred of the Saxon name. In the following year, the king of Denmark landed on the western coast, and took ample
1003—1014. measure of revenge. He continued to ravage England from this time to his death. Svend was seconded in his

attempt to subdue the country by Thorkil Jarl, a famous Jómsvíkingar, but who was subsequently tempted by the bribe of the Earldom of East-Anglia to enter the service of Ethelred; by Edric Streone, a Saxon favourite, and the son-in-law of Ethelred, who betrayed his country and benefactor; and by numerous Sea-Kings and military adventurers from all the countries of the North. The Danish monarch entered the Humber with a 1013.
powerful and splendid armament, and committing his fleet to the command of his son Canute, marched with his land forces into Wessex, which he laid waste and subdued. Ethelred abandoned London, and took refuge in the isle of Wight. The burgesses opened their gates to the invader, who was at last acknowledged by the Anglo-Saxons as their king, and Ethelred, who had married Emma, the sister of Richard, the third duke of Normandy, found a refuge in that country beyond the reach of his conqueror.*

Svend was succeeded in the throne of Denmark by his son Knútr,—Knud,—or as he is called by the English historians, Canute, who was also chosen by the *Thingmannalid*, or Danish soldiery in England, their king. But the Anglo-Saxon thanes sent to Ethelred

* Turner, vol. iii. pp. 229—252. Palgrave, vol. 1. pp. 283—301. Suhm, H. af D. tom. iii. pp. 329—425. Lingard's Hist. of England vol. 1. pp. 339—357. Roman de Rou, tom. i. pp. 323—328. Ed. Pluquet.

Svend is supposed to have been treacherously assassinated by the Anglo-Saxons. The Knytlingasaga and Snorre, after it, states that he was found dead in his bed, and—"Englishmen say that St Edmund slew him, in the same manner that Julian the Apostate was killed by *Saint*-Mercury." Knytlingasaga, cap. vi. p. 164. Rafn's Ed. Snorre, Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. ix.

in Normandy, to invite him back to rule over his countrymen, upon condition, that he should reform his past conduct and govern justly.*

Canute, who, like so many other mighty conquerors, has received from history the questionable title of Great, earned it by wading through seas of blood, and by the commission of crimes which, even in the opinion of a dark and barbarous age, could only be expiated by humiliating penance and lavish donations to the church of Rome. His royal father left him the dubious inheritance of a foreign crown, in a wasted and recently conquered country. To maintain the prize which Svend had hardly earned, Canute invoked the aid of Erik Jarl, son of the famous Hakon Jarl; whilst Ethelred engaged in his service Olaf, son of Harald Grænske, then a wandering adventurer, or Sea-king, but destined afterwards to hold the Norwegian sceptre, which had been
1016. swayed by his ancestor, Harald I. But the energy and activity of Canute prevailed over the ill-directed efforts of the feeble Ethelred, whose death at this time happily delivered England from her incapable monarch, and gave her one more desperate chance to recover her national independence.†

The Anglo-Saxons were now ruled by a sovereign worthy to wield the sceptre and the sword of Alfred. Had Edmund-Ironside been opposed by a less formidable competitor than Canute, or had his efforts been worthily seconded by his people, he might have rescued them from that humiliating position in which he found them.

* Palgrave, vol. i. p. 302.

† Snorre, Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. xi. Knytlingasaga, cap. viii. p. 165. Ed. Rafn.

Edmund was in all respects the contrast of his father Ethelred. But a succession of such princes as Edred, Edwin, Edgar, Edward, and Ethelred, the slaves of their own sensual and selfish appetites, and of the insolent churchmen who ruled in their names, had gradually worn out the original spirit and energy of the Anglo-Saxon race. This rapid degeneracy of princes and people, who had lost the military virtues of their barbarous ancestors, without acquiring any of the better fruits of civilization, can only be compared to the similar phenomenon of the wasting decay of the Franks under the Merovingian and Carlovingian kings. Both nations were thus prepared, by the same circumstances in their condition, to become the easy prey of the Northmen, and in both, these circumstances are to be attributed to similar causes. The pictures which are drawn by the cotemporary annalists of France and England of the condition of the two countries in that age, are painted with the same colours, and are evidently taken from resembling originals. The tyranny and imbecility of the government, the rapaciousness and ambition of the clergy, and the gross superstition, degradation, and slavery of the people, all conspired to produce this rapid decline, which was finally consummated by foreign conquest. But a new principle of life was infused into these human societies even by this, the greatest of national calamities, and the two most distinguished nations of Europe were thus gradually prepared for that lead which they have since taken in the civilization and improvement of mankind.* 946—1016.

* The *Dane-Geld*, extorted by the Northmen invaders during seven years of the reign of Ethelred, from 999 to 1007, besides plunder and quartering upon the inhabitants, amounted to 80,000 pounds of silver. Each pound was then equivalent, in weight of silver, to

1016. Canute directed his first efforts against London, which was defended by Edmund, with the aid of a band of Northmen, under Olaf. The city was at that time fortified along the margin of the river, and the Danes had seized the borough of Southwark, which Snorre calls 'a great emporium;' where they built a strong work, and dug a channel on the right bank, through which they drew their ships up the river above the bridges, so as to cut off all communication by water with the metropolis. The object of the Anglo-Saxons was to destroy the fortified bridges by which the enemy might enter the city from the south bank of the river. This they effected, principally through the skill and valour of Olaf and their other Northmen allies, and the citizens afterwards rendered London impregnable against the enemy.*

During the intervals of the siege, Edmund fought two battles in the country with Canute, in the last of which the Danes were successful, but made no other use of their victory than to march back to their naval station on the Thames, and renew the blockade of London. The siege was again raised by Edmund, and a decisive battle was at last fought at Assandun, in Essex, in which Canute, principally through the treachery of the Anglo-

somewhat more than three pounds of the present British currency. But Mr Palgrave, taking the ordinary price of land at five pounds of silver per hyde, computes that this entire amount of tribute would have purchased 1,920,000 acres of arable land, together with such privileges in the woods and common lands appurtenant, as might be considered as trebling the superficial admeasurement. Hist. of England, vol. i. pp. 287—291.

* Knytlingasaga, cap. xiii. p. 174. Ed. Rafn. Snorre, Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. xi. xii. Snorre errs in supposing the siege to have occurred in the reign of Ethelred, or *Adalrad*, as he calls the Saxon monarch.

Saxon Edric, was victorious. But Edmund retired to the West to rouse his countrymen to new exertions, and Canute was induced to enter into a treaty of partition, by which Wessex, Essex, East-Anglia, and London were assigned to Edmund, and the ancient Danish kingdom of Northumberland, with the residue of the country, was left to Canute. Rich gifts of armour and clothes were exchanged between the rival monarchs:—but the patriot king, whose heroic valour and prudent conduct seemed worthy of a better fate, did not long survive this hollow pacification. Edmund fell by the dagger of the traitor Edric, who was bribed by the Danish monarch to deliver him from a dreaded rival.*

Canute was saluted king of England, first by the Jarls 1016.
and other Danish chieftains, his military companions, and next by the Anglo-Saxon thanes and people, terrified into submission by the menaces of their conqueror.† He put to death Edwy (the half-brother of Edmund), and sent the children of that monarch to the Swedish king, with a request that they might be secretly dispatched. The noble nature of the Swede refused to comply with the criminal suggestions of Canute, and sent the boys to Stephen, king of Hungary, at whose court they were educated. The survivor of the youthful princes afterwards espoused the daughter of the emperor, Henry III, from whom descended Edgar Atheling and Margaret, queen of Scotland. Canute also cemented his throne with the blood of several noble Saxons,

* Suhm, H. af D., tom. iii. pp. 458—481. Knytlingasaga, cap. xvi. p. 178. Rafn's Ed. Turner, tom. iii. pp. 260—268.

† On this occasion the natives paid Dane-Geld to the amount of 72,000 pounds of silver, which was distributed among the *Thingmannalid*, or household troops of Canute.

whom he slew in violation of the solemn treaty he had made with the nation. He rewarded the military adventurers, to whom he was indebted for the splendid prize, with the spoils of the vanquished Saxons. The earldom of Northumbria was committed to Erik Hakonson; East-Anglia to Thorkil, one of the bravest of his Jarls; and Mercia to Edric, the Saxon traitor. But the latter was not long suffered to enjoy the fruits of his crime. He imprudently boasted of his services to the Danish tyrant: 'I first deserted my king to serve you; for you I killed Edmund.'—''Tis fit then you should die,' exclaimed Canute, 'for your treason to God and me. You killed your own lord!—him, who by treaty and friendship was my brother; your blood be upon your own head for murdering the lord's anointed!'—Erik struck down the wretch with his battle-axe, and the dead body was thrown from the window of the palace into the Thames.*

Thorkil, to whose heroic valour Canute was mainly indebted for the conquest of England, was afterwards treated by him with the blackest ingratitude, and the king was even suspected, on good grounds, of being accessary to the Jarl's death.†

Still further to strengthen his grasp of the Anglo-Saxon sceptre, Canute espoused Emma, the widow of Ethelred, and sister of duke Richard II, of Normandy, to whom he also gave his own sister, Estritha, in marriage.‡ Nor was he satisfied with this obvious means of

* Lingard, vol. i. p. 371. Turner, vol. iii. pp. 280—285.

† Suhm, H. af D., tom. iii. p. 541.

‡ From this union descended duke Robert, the father of William the Conqueror.—Richard II having subsequently repudiated Estritha, she married Ulfr Jarl, and their son, Svend Estrithson, became

securing his acquisition. He sought to blend the conquering Danes and vanquished Saxons, who inhabited the same island as two distinct nations, into one united people, governed by the same laws and religious institutions. The legislation of Canute was wisely adapted to promote this object, so desirable both for his own personal interest and for the general prosperity of the kingdom.

As in the other provinces of the Roman empire conquered by the Barbarians, so in Britain, each nation which successively occupied the country, was allowed by compact to enjoy its own peculiar laws. In a Vitenagemót held at Winchester, a collection of the ancient customary laws of the kingdom was compiled, under the auspices of Canute, and promulgated with such modifications as were required by the conquest. The system of jurisprudence thus confirmed was founded upon the three different customs or laws of the West Saxons, of the Mercians, and of the Danes. The two former were the old laws of the Anglo-Saxons: the latter had been introduced into East-Anglia and Northumbria by the Danes. In their general spirit and outlines they were the same, differing mainly in the value of the mulcts or fines imposed for various offences. In the case of homicide, these were fixed according to the price, or *were* set upon every individual from the highest to the lowest ranks.

The subject of religion makes a very important part

the founder of what is called the second or middle race of Danish kings, who reigned from the year 1047, to the death of Valdemar IV, in 1375. In this manner the sister of Canute became the common stock, from which the Anglo-Norman and Danish kings traced their descent.

of the institutes of Canute. He called himself a Christian, but probably a large proportion of his Danish followers were heathens, or at least secretly devoted to the ancient deities of their country. Canute was resolved to shew his zeal for the new religion, if not by conforming his conduct to the morality of the gospel, at least by prohibiting the exercise of any other form of worship. He therefore forbade 'every superstition of the heathens, such as the worship of idols, the sun, moon, fire, of stones or fountains, of the forest trees, and of green or dry wood.' At the same time he denounced the severest punishment against those who pretended to deal in magic, assassins, and the 'workers of murder,' whether it were by lots, or flame, or by any other charms. He prohibited the practice of sending 'Christians' for sale into foreign parts, least falling into the hands of Gentile masters, 'the souls should perish whom Christ had redeemed with his blood.' He also ordained that 'Christian men' should not be punished with death for 'small offences, such as robbery and the like,' but in some other way be corrected, in order to prevent the repetition of those crimes.

Canute also waived the exercise of his kingly prerogative of purveyance, commanding his bailiffs diligently to cultivate his farms, and to supply the royal tables from their produce. He fixed at a moderate price the heriots which were to be paid on the demise of his thanes and other tenants, apportioning them to the rank of the deceased, and entirely exempting the property of those who died in the military service of the king. He enacted that no woman should be compelled to marry against her will, nor sold for money or any other thing, except such present as the husband should freely give.

In conclusion, he commanded these laws to be observed by all his people, both Danes and English, and in case of violation, the offender should pay *his price* to the king for the first offence; for the second, double that sum; and for the third, should forfeit all his property.*

Having reduced his newly acquired kingdom into some tolerable order, Canute found time to visit his native country, where his presence had become imperiously necessary. His father, Svend Haraldson, was a fanatic votary of the ancient worship of the North, and if he ever, at any period of his reign, professed to be a Christian, his professions were belied not merely by his moral conduct, but also by the countenance which he constantly gave to the heathen party. The whole population of the Danish states at that period is computed by Suhm, on grounds which may be considered as tolerably satisfactory, at 800,000 souls, of which at least one-half still continued to worship the gods of their fathers. But under the reign of Canute, the Romish religion made rapid progress, and almost entirely supplanted the ancient superstition. He built churches and cloisters, and filled the kingdom with Saxon priests, who, if they provoked the envy and jealousy of the natives by their rapaciousness, contributed to promote its improvement by presenting a somewhat higher standard of civilization than the Danish nation had yet attained. The royal residence had been removed from the ancient seat of the heathen superstition at Ledra to Roskild, during the reign of Harald Blaatand, and this Christian

* Lingard, vol. 1. p. 377—379. LL. Canuti Magni Notisque, &c. edit. Kolderup Rosinvinge, Havniæ, 1826. pp. 36, 88, 94, 98, 100.

city continued to be the seat of government until it was transferred to the present capital of Copenhagen. The vestiges of the old religion still lingered in the neighbouring isles of Fionia, Laaland, and Falster, and as it happened on the introduction of Christianity into the Roman empire, remained longer in the sequestered woods and wilds than in the more cultivated districts of the country. They are still to be traced in the popular traditions and superstition of the rural part of Zealand, which, like other Northern countries, continues to cling to its faith in good and evil demons, elves or fairies, who are supposed to haunt the hills, and woods, and lakes, anciently consecrated to the worship of the heathen deities. The tombs of the ancient kings and heroes in the plain of Ledra are approached with dread by the superstitious peasant. Blue flames are seen to arise from their graves, which are believed to be inhabited by vampires and elfish phantoms, who pursue with unhallowed love the beautiful daughters of men, and fill with changlings the cradle of the new-born child whose parents have imprudently neglected the rite of baptism.*

1027. The crimes of Canute weighed heavy on his soul, and he sought to expiate them by liberal donations to the church, and by some signal act of penitence. For this purpose he undertook a pilgrimage to Rome, and has himself left a record of the circumstances of his journey, in a letter addressed to the English clergy and people, in which he expressly states that he went to procure the pardon of his sins, and to promote the welfare of his subjects.

* Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. pp. 405—428.

"Canute, king of all Denmark, England, and Norway, and of part of Sweden,* to Egelnoth the Metropolitan, to archbishop Alfric, to all the bishops and chiefs, and to all the nation of the English, both nobles and commoners, greeting. I write to inform you that I have lately been at Rome, *to pray for the remission of my sins*, and for the safety of my kingdoms, and of the nations that are subject to my sceptre. It is long since I bound myself by vow to make this pilgrimage; but I had been hitherto prevented by affairs of state and other impediments. Now, however, I return humble thanks to the Almighty God, that he has allowed me to visit the tombs of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and every holy place within and without the city of Rome, and to honor and venerate them in person. And this I have done, because I had learned from my teachers that the apostle St Peter received from the Lord the great power of binding and loosing, with the keys of the kingdom of heaven. *On this account, I thought it highly useful to solicit his patronage with God.*

"Be it moreover known to you, that there was, at the festival of Easter, a great assemblage of noble personages, with the lord the pope John, and the emperor Conrad, namely, all the chiefs of the nations from Mount Gargano to the nearest sea, who all received me honorably, and made me valuable presents; but particularly the emperor, who gave me many gold and

* If Canute's journey to Rome was in 1027, as seems to be conclusively proved by the Danish chronologists, he could not have then entitled himself king of Norway, &c., and these titles must consequently have been interpolated by some copyist, who supposed the journey to have taken place in 1030. Suhm, Historie af Danmark, tom. iii. p. 611. Note.

silver vases, with rich mantles and garments. I therefore took the opportunity to treat with the pope, the emperor, and the princes, on the grievances of my people, both English and Danes; that they might enjoy more equal law, and more secure safeguard in their way to Rome, nor be detained at so many barriers, nor harassed by unjust exactions. My demands were granted both by the emperor and by king Rodulf, who rules most of the passages; and it was enacted by all the princes, that my *men*, whether pilgrims or merchants, should, for the future, go to Rome and return in full security, without detention at the barriers, or the payment of unlawful tolls.

" I next complained to the pope, and expressed my displeasure that such immense sums should be extorted from my archbishops, when according to custom they visited the apostolic see to obtain the pallium. A decree was made that this grievance should cease. Whatever I demanded for the benefit of my people, either of the pope, or the emperor, or the princes, through whose dominions lies the road to Rome, was granted willingly, and confirmed by their oaths, in the presence of four archbishops, twenty bishops, and a multitude of dukes and nobles. Wherefore I return sincere thanks to God that I have successfully performed whatever I had intended, and have fully satisfied all my wishes.

" Now, therefore, be it known to you all, that I have dedicated my life to the service of God, to govern my kingdoms with equity, and to observe justice in all things. *If by the impetuosity or negligence of youth, I have violated justice heretofore, it is my intention, by the help of God, to make full compensation.* Therefore I beg and command those to whom I have confided the

rule, as they wish to preserve my friendship or save their own souls, to do no injustice either to rich or poor. Let all persons, whether noble or ignoble, obtain their rights according to law, from which no deviation shall be allowed, either from fear of me, or through favor to the powerful, or for the purpose of supplying my treasury. I have no need of money raised by injustice.

"I am now on my road to Denmark, for the purpose of concluding peace with those nations, who, had it been in their power, would have deprived us both of our crown and our life. But God has destroyed their means: and will, I trust, of his goodness preserve us, and humble all our enemies. When I shall have concluded peace with the neighbouring nations, and settled the concerns of my eastern dominions, it is my intention to return to England as soon as the fine weather will permit me to sail. But I have sent you this letter beforehand: that all the people of my kingdom may rejoice at my prosperity. For you all know that I never spared, nor will spare myself, or my labour, when my object is the welfare of my subjects.

"Lastly, I entreat all my bishops and all my sheriffs, by the fidelity which they owe to me and to God, that the church-dues, according to the ancient laws, may be paid before my return: namely, the plough alms, the tithes of cattle of the present year, the Peter-pence, the tithes of fruit in the middle of August, and the kirk-shot at the feast of St Martin, to the parish church. Should this be omitted, at my return I will punish the offender, by exacting the whole fine imposed by law. Fare ye well." *

* Lingard, vol. i. pp. 383—386.

The ambition of Canute was not satiated by the possession of two such kingdoms as Denmark and England. He pretended to have some claims upon Norway, through his father Svend, who had formerly ruled over a portion of that country. But the Norwegian people had acknowledged the paramount pretensions of Olaf, the son of Harald Grœnske, and a lineal descendant from Harald I, the founder of their monarchy. After the death of his father, the young Olaf found an asylum with Sigurd Syr, a king of the Norwegian Uplands, who had espoused the widow of Harald. His step-father educated the young prince according to the fashion of the times, and sent him on a sea-roving expedition, in the twelfth year of his age. He infested the coasts of England, and, at the age of sixteen, had already been engaged in nine great battles, including those which he fought in the service of the Anglo-Saxons against Canute. He also cruized two years on the coasts of France and Spain, and subsequently took advantage of the absence of Erik, the son of Hakon Jarl, who was in England with Canute, to assert his claims to the throne of Norway. He was joyfully received by his countrymen, and especially by the Christian party, to whom he was recommended by his burning zeal for the new religion. He had been baptized in the third year of his age, and Olaf Tryggvason held him over the sacred font. He sought to establish the Christianity of the age by the same means to which his god-father, Olaf Tryggvason, had resorted for the same purpose. He persecuted the unfortunate heathens with fire and sword, burnt their temples, and erected churches on the ruins, marched through the country with an armed band, compelling them to be baptized at the point of the sword,

and vainly endeavouring to root out the last vestige of the ancient religion. Yet Olaf was capable of thinking and acting in a better strain. He vainly endeavoured to persuade a distinguished Jarl of West Gothland (not one of his own subjects) to embrace the new religion, and on his pertinaciously refusing, the king declared, that though he had the power, he would not compel the Jarl to be baptized, as 'God would not have any to serve him against their will.'*

Canute had left his son Harde-Knud in Denmark, under the guardianship of the king's brother-in-law Ulfr Jarl, who persuaded the young prince to suffer himself to be proclaimed king, under the pretext that he had his royal father's authority to that effect. But on the approach of Canute with a powerful fleet from England, the usurping party supplicated his mercy, and the father readily forgave the son, whom he considered merely as the unconscious instrument of the Jarl's ambition. Canute dissembled his resentment at the conduct of the Jarl, but his smothered passion burst forth against him on an occasion, which is related by Snorre as follows:—

"King Canute invited his sister's husband, Ulfr Jarl, to a great feast at Roskild, where the Jarl endeavoured, by pleasant discourse, to entertain the king. But Canute was gloomy, and sparing of his words, so that the Jarl finally proposed to him a game of chess, which the king accepted. Now, Ulfr was a man of quick temper, yielding to no one, of swift despatch in business, and a brave warrior. Next to the king, he was the most powerful man in Denmark. His sister Gyda

* Müller, Sagabibliothek, tom. iii p. 302.

was married to Godwin Jarl, son of Ulfnath, and their sons were—Harald, afterwards king of the English, Tosti Jarl, and three others, with a daughter, named after her mother Gyda, who was married to Edward the Good, also king of the English.

"The game of chess commenced, and in the course of it the king made a wrong move. Upon this the Jarl took one of the king's knights from the board. But the king took it back again, and commanded the Jarl not to play in that manner. The wrath of the Jarl was kindled, and striking the table violently with his hand, he rose up to go away, when the king exclaimed, 'Coward, do'st thou fly?'

"'You would have fled farther, if it were not for me, at the mouth of the river Helga, when the Swedes beat you as dogs,' answered the insulted Jarl, and retired for the night. The king also retired shortly after, and the next morning ordered one of his attendants to go and kill the Jarl. The young man returned in a short time, and in answer to the king's enquiries whether the Jarl was slain, informed Canute that he had taken sanctuary in St Luke's church. The king then summoned into his presence Ivar the White, a Northman by birth, who was one of the guards of the royal bed-chamber, and commanded him to go and slay Ulfr. Ivar tracked the Jarl to the inner choir of the church, and there slew him. The assassin ran back to the king with the bloody sword in his hand. 'Hast thou slain the Jarl?' exclaimed the king. 'I have slain him,' replied Ivar. 'Thou hast done well!' said the king. After the Jarl was slain, the monks shut up their church, but the king sent to order them to open it again, and sing a mass, which they did. The king then came to

the church, and endowed it with a large tract of land, which it possesses to this day."*

Canute accomplished his designs upon Norway with 1028.
but little resistance on the part of Olaf, who was abandoned by the principal chieftains and the people, some of whom he had disgusted by his severity in matters of religion; others were seduced by the money and blandishments of the rich and powerful monarch, who was able to hold out such strong inducements to their hopes and their fears. Canute landed with a great force at Drontheim; the fickle people of Norway acknowledged him as their king, and Olaf sought a refuge with his brother-in-law, Jarislaf, a Russian prince, of the house of Rurick. The exiled monarch took with him his infant son Magnus, and was hospitably received at the Russian court. After the death of Hakon, son of 1030.
Erik Jarl, whom Canute had set over Norway as his lieutenant, Olaf returned to Sweden, and with the aid of the king of that country made a desperate attempt to recover his crown. But he was defeated and slain in a battle fought near Nidarôs, the modern Drontheim. His body was secretly buried by one of his faithful adherents, but not long afterwards disinterred and carried to Drontheim, where in was deposited in the magnificent cathedral, which rose upon the ruins of the temple of Thor. Olaf was revered as a saint and a martyr, and might be almost said to have taken the place of the ancient tutelary deity of Norway, in the affections of the people. Churches and shrines were erected to the memory of the royal saint and hero, not only in his native country, but

* Snorre, Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. clxii, clxiii.

in Denmark, Sweden, England, Russia, and even by the Væringjar at Constantinople.*

Canute, having disposed of all his rivals and satiated his ambition with the conquest of Norway, spent the residue of his life in the enjoyment of his acquisitions, in those acts of self-mortification, which were esteemed so meritorious in that age, and, it is but justice to add, in the performance of the public duties of his station. His liberality to the clergy and to the Skalds, the two orders of men who engrossed the intelleotual cultivation of that age, was boundless; and his taste for magnificence in dress, in arms, and in the arrangements of his court, was indulged to a degree of splendour unparalleled by any of his Saxon or Danish predecessors.† The author of the Encomium of Emma has described in glowing terms

* Knytlingasaga, cap. xvii. p. 179. Ed. Rafn. Snorre, Saga af Olafi hinom Helga, cap. clxxx — ccli. Münter, Kirchengeschichte, &c. tom. i. pp. 512—514.

† We have already seen that Canute was a liberal patron of the Skalds, (ch. iv. p. 54), but Mr Palgrave says that the Anglo-Danish king was himself a poet. "A ballad which he composed continued long afterwards to be a favorite among the common people of England. It chanced that, when navigating the Nenne, near the Minster of Ely, the sweet and solemn tones of the choral psalmody fell on his ear; and Canute burst forth with his lay—

'Merrily sung the monks within Ely,
When Canute, King, rowed thereby.
Row, my knights; row near the land,
And hear we these monkés' song.'

All the other stanzas have been lost; and we may regret that we possess no further specimens of this composition, which entitles Canute to rank as one of the royal authors of England." Hist. of England, vol. i. p. 320.

the magnificent equipment of the royal fleet, with which Canute sailed from Denmark to England, which, even after making due allowances for the rhetorical embellishments of the writer, give a striking idea of the splendour of his naval equipments. His magnanimity was, perhaps, somewhat ostentatiously exhibited in the incident related by Saxo, of the public sentence pronounced by Canute on himself, for having slain one of his soldiers, whose *price* he paid with nine times the mulct inflicted by the law, adding nine 'talents' of gold as a further compensation. But the manner in which he rebuked the flattery of his courtiers, by commanding the waves of the sea to retire before him, marked a soul truly capable of magnanimous sentiments and of soaring above the adventitious circumstances of his condition, to the author of nature 'whose everlasting laws, the heavens, the earth, and sea, with all their hosts, obey.'*

* Turner, vol. iii. p. 292.

CHAPTER XVI.

Harald Harefoot. Hardecanute.—Magnus, king of Norway. Svend Estrithson.—Adventures of Harald Sigurdson at Constantinople. His return to the North, and accession to the crown of Norway.—State of the North during the reign of Svend Estrithson in Denmark.—State of the duchy of Normandy. Accession of duke William.—Conquest of Naples and Sicily by the Normans.—Reign of Edward the Confessor in England.—Earl Godwin and his sons.—Visit of Harold, son of Godwin, to Normandy.—Death of Edward the Confessor.—Preparations of duke William for the invasion of England.—Tostig, son of Godwin, the fugitive Earl of Northumberland, applies for aid to the king of Norway.—Invasion of Northumbria by the Norwegians.—Defeat and death of Harald Sigurdson.—Battle of Hastings.—Death of Harold, son of Godwin.

1035. CANUTE left at his death a son named Hörda-Knútr, Harde-Knud, or as he is called by the English historians, Hardecanute, whom he had by queen Emma, and who, by his legitimate birth, by the nuptial contract between Canute and Emma, and by a recent declaration of the king, ought to have succeeded to the English crown. But that prince had been previously sent to take possession of Denmark, and his brother Harald, the illegitimate son of Canute by his concubine Alfgiva, the daughter of Alfhelm, earl of Northampton, by his daring promptitude and the favour of the Danish soldiery in England, ascended the throne of that country. The crown of

Norway had been previously conferred upon Svend, the elder brother of Harald.*

The short reign of Harald is marked by no memorable event, except the atrocious murder of Alfred, one of the surviving children of Ethelred and Emma, who was enticed from his retreat in Normandy, under the pretext of asserting his claim to the crown. This crime weighs heavy on the fame of a monarch, who was distinguished for nothing besides, but his attachment to the pleasures of the chace, in which he frequently hunted on foot, and acquired the name of *Harefod*, or Hare-foot, from his swiftness in running. He died after a short reign of four years, and was buried at Westminster.† 1040.

Harde-Knud, king of Denmark, succeeded his brother Harald Hare-foot as king of England, and his first care on his arrival in the country was, to wage an impotent war of revenge with the dead, by ordering the tomb of his predecessor, whom he treated as a usurper, to be opened, and the body to be decapitated and thrown into the Thames. The Anglo-Saxons, who resisted the imposition of a new tax for the support of the *Thingmannalid*, or Danish soldiery, who held the natives in slavery, were severely chastised by military execution at Worcester. But these acts of brutal revenge and cruel severity were, in some degree, redeemed by his kindness to the race of Ethelred. He had even designed to punish the Saxon Earl Godwin, who was vehemently suspected

* Lingard's Hist. of England, vol. i. pp. 386, 387. Turner's Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. pp. 301, 302. Palgrave, Hist. of England, vol. i. pp. 321, 322.

† Lingard, vol. i. pp. 389—393. Turner, vol. iii. pp. 303—305. Roman de Rou, tom. ii. p. 67. Ed. Pluquet.

of plotting the death of prince Alfred, but who exculpated himself by his oath, and the oaths of twelve compurgators, the principal noblemen of England. Godwin also propitiated the resentment of Harde-Knud with the present of a magnificent ship, the stern of which was covered with plates of gold, and which was manned with eighty warriors, whose armour blazed with gold and silver decorations—a gift suited to the taste of the Northmen, who expended the plunder of nations in embellishing their arms and ships. The Earl was restored to favour, and joined with queen Emma in the administration of the kingdom. Harde-Knud sent for his half-brother Edward (afterwards king Edward the Confessor), the
1042. remaining child of Ethelred, from Normandy, and gave him a princely endowment. He died, without issue, after a still shorter reign than his predecessor, and with him ended the Danish dynasty in England.*

The partial and unjust rule of Svend, the son of Canute the Great, in Norway, provoked the resentment of the Norwegian chieftains, who turned their eyes
1036. towards Magnus, the son of St Olaf, then an exile at the court of the Russian prince Jaroslaf. Magnus returned to Norway, and was received with open arms by the nation. Svend fled to Denmark, where he died the same year, and Magnus was proclaimed king of Norway. Harde-Knud, king of Denmark and England, after-
1039. wards endeavoured to assert his claims upon Norway, which had formed a part of the extensive dominions of his father Canute. But he found it impossible to enforce his pretensions by force of arms, and a compact was

* Lingard, vol. i. pp. 393—398. Turner, vol. iii. pp. 306—308. Palgrave, vol. i. pp. 323—325.

concluded between the two kings, under the mediation of the Danish and Norwegian Jarls and chieftains, by which it was stipulated, that the survivor should inherit both kingdoms. On the death of Harde-Knud, Magnus succeeded without a contest to the throne of Denmark, although there was a prince still living, descended on the maternal side from the ancient line of the Danish monarchs, whose pretensions might be considered, under any settled rule of hereditary succession, as paramount to those of the Norwegian king. Svend, the son of Ulfr Jarl and of Estritha, the sister of Canute the Great, had found an asylum in Sweden after the assassination of his father. He afterwards presented himself at the court of Magnus, in Norway, who, with that unsuspecting confidence which belonged to his nature, not only received him with kindness, but named him his lieutenant in Denmark. Magnus publicly armed the young prince with sword and helmet, and declared him Jarl of Denmark. Svend Estrithson solemnly swore fidelity to the Norwegian king on the relics of St Olaf, and was conducted by Magnus into Denmark, where he was received with satisfaction by the people. Svend soon forgot his obligations to his benefactor, or considered his duties to his native country and his claims upon the Danish crown as paramount, and formed a faction in Denmark, with the view of asserting its independence of Norway. He was overcome by the superior force of Magnus, and compelled to fly from the country.*

Not content with having thus reunited two of the kingdoms, the sceptre of which had been swayed by Harde-Knud, Magnus demanded the Anglo-Saxon 1046.

* Snorre, Saga af Magnusi Goda, cap. i.—xxxii.

crown, upon the pretext that it was included in the stipulations of his treaty with Harde-Knud. Edward the Confessor returned for answer to this demand, that he sat on the throne of England by hereditary right, derived from his father Ethelred, which had only been interrupted, for a time, by the conquest of Canute, and was confirmed by the free choice of the people, which claim he was resolved to abandon only with his life. Magnus found it convenient to be satisfied with this sensible and manly reply.*

A competitor to Magnus in the throne of Norway now presented himself in the person of Harald Sigurdson, the half brother of St Olaf. This prince was present at the battle at which St Olaf lost both his life and his crown, and afterwards sought an asylum at the court of Jaroslaf in Russia, by whom he was received with kindness and friendship. Here he became enamoured of Elisif, or Elizabeth, the daughter of the Russian grand duke; but his suit not being successful, he pursued his way to
1034. Constantinople (Miklagard) where he entered the service of the Greek emperor as an officer of his Scandinavian body-guard, the Væringjar.† He ultimately obtained the

* Snorre, Saga af Magnusi Goda, cap. xxxviii—xxxix. Lingard, vol. i. p. 402. Turner, vol. iii. p. 312.

† Harald, who was himself a Skald, as well as liberal patron of the Skaldic art, is said to have composed, on this occasion, a lay, which is preserved by Snorre, among the other fragmentary poetry quoted in his Heimskringla. But as it contains allusions to the royal bard's subsequent exploits in the East, it is more probably the work of some other cotemporary or later Skald. The Editor has been favored by his friend, Dr Bowring, with the following translation of this lay, which will be included in his intended collection of Scandinavian Songs.

command of these troops, and undertook an expedition against the pirates who infested the Mediterranean. He reinforced his band with other Norman adventurers in Sicily, and attacked the coast of Africa, where he gained many battles, and acquired much booty, which he sent

1.

'Our ships (*a*) along Sicilia plied
In those our days of strength and pride,
And Venger's Stag (*b*) the warriors carried
Still on and on—nor ever tarried.
No craven coward, well I wis,
E'er track'd a dangerous path like this.
Yet Gardar's Gerda—gold-ring'd maid! (*c*)
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

2.

* * * * * *

3.

'We bailed the ship—we, six and ten,
As broke the mighty seas again—
As rushed the billows at our feet,
While toiling on the rowers' seat.
No craven coward, well I wis,
E'er track'd a dangerous way like this.
Yet Gardar's Gerda—gold-ring'd maid!
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

(*a*) In the original—the Planks—the Keel.

(*b*) Venger—a Vikingr of old times—the Stag, his battle-ship.

(*c*) The alliteration of the original line, and its peculiar poetic beauty, which consists in an allusion to one of the fables of the Northern mythology, is happily preserved in this translation. Gardar-ríke—Russia, the Russian land. Gerda, a mythic-poetic name for Harald's mistress Elizabeth. Gerda was the beloved of Freyer, the god of the sun, whose love was so long resisted by Gerda. Freyer had also offered to Gerda a golden ring—hence the allusion.—F. Magnússen, Lex. Myt. Bor. 116. 439.

1044. to his friends in Russia. He visited the Holy Land, and on his return to Constantinople, the empress Zoe conceived a passion for the Norwegian hero. But

4.

'Eight (*a*) virtues have I—I can pour
Out Odin's drink—and forge the ore—
Upon the active horse can ride:
And I can breast the ocean-tide,
And I can glide on skates of snow,
And I can shoot, and I can row.
Yet Gardar's Gerda—gold-ring'd maid!
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

5.

'Can widow, or can maid gainsay,
That we have clash'd our swords in fray,
That we have sought the Southern land,
And forced the city with our band?
At break of day our foes were slain—
And still the vestiges remain.
Yet Gardar's Gerda—gold-ring'd maid!
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.

6.

'And I was born in mountains where
The highland heroes wield the spear.
My war-ships, fear'd by men of flocks,
I guide across the ocean-rocks,
And long o'er ocean's waves have bounded,
And many an ocean-isle surrounded.
Yet Gardar's Gerda—gold-ring'd maid!
Flings scorn upon the hero's head.'

(*a*) Yet only seven are enumerated. Professor F. Magnússen supposes the original second line may have been

Ó'ð, fet ek lið, at smið a.

Which may be rendered—I make verses—I arrange the battle—I forge (or smith) the ore.

Harald having now received tidings that his nephew Magnus Olafson was proclaimed king of Norway and Denmark, longed to return to his native country of the North. He therefore tendered his resignation to the Greek emperor. This inflamed the resentment of the empress Zoe, who preferred a false charge against Harald for having embezzled the imperial portion of the booty which he had taken in war. Harald had previously demanded the hand of a young and beautiful Greek virgin, niece of the empress, named Maria, but Zoe refused to grant his suit:—and, says Snorre, "those Væringjar, who were in Miklagard, and received rewards for their services during the war, have said since their return home to the North, that they were told in Greece by wise and grave men of that country, that queen Zoe herself wished for Harald as her husband, and that this in truth was the cause of her resentment, and of his wishing to leave Miklagard, though other reports were spread among the people. For these reasons, the king Constantinus Monomachus, who ruled the empire jointly with queen Zoe, ordered Harald to be cast into prison. On his way thither, St Olaf appeared to him, and promised him protection; and on that same street a chapel has been since erected, which is standing at this day. Here was Harald imprisoned with Halldór and Ulfr, his *men*. The following night there came a noble lady, with two attendants, who let down a cord into the dungeon, and drew up the prisoners. This lady had been before healed by St Olaf, the king, who revealed to her that she should relieve his brother from captivity. This being done, Harald immediately went to the Væringjar, who all rose up at his approach, and received him with joy. They seized their arms, and went to the

chamber where the king slept, and put out his eyes. The same night, Harald went, with his companions, to the chamber in which Maria slept, and carried her away by force. They afterwards proceeded to the place where the gallies of the Væringjar are kept, and, seizing two vessels, rowed into the Bosphorus (Sævidar-sund). When they came to the iron chains which are drawn across the sound, Harald ordered all his men who were not employed in rowing, to crowd to the stern with their baggage, and when the gallies struck upon the chains, to rush forward to the prow, so as to impel the gallies over the chains. The galley in which Harald embarked was carried quite over on to the other side, but the other vessel struck upon the chains, and was lost. Some of her crew perished in the water, but others were saved. In this manner, Harald escaped from Miklagard, and entered the Black sea, where he set the virgin on shore, with some attendants, to accompany her back to Miklagard, requesting her to tell her cousin, queen Zoe, how little her power could have availed to prevent his carrying off the virgin, if he had been so minded." *

On his return to Russia, Harald found the treasure which he had previously sent thither, safely deposited in the hands of Jaroslaf, who now gave his daughter Elizabeth to the Northern adventurer, who had thus returned from the East loaded with riches and honor.

* Snorre, Saga af Haraldi Hardráda, cap. i—xv. See also Prof. P. E. Müller's Dissertation on the Sources of Snorre, in the 6th vol. of the new edition of Heimskringla, pp. 310—316.

The adventures of Harald at Constantinople, have been made the subject of one of Œlenschlæger's most recent tragedies—the *Væringerne i Miklagord.*

Harald went to Sweden, where he found the exiled Danish prince, Svend Estrithson, with whom he formed a compact to make common cause against Magnus. But he soon deserted the interests of Svend Estrithson, and entered into a treaty with Magnus, by which it was stipulated that the kingdom of Norway should be partitioned between them, upon condition that the rich treasure of Harald should, in like manner, be divided between the two kings. This treasure was an object of great importance, as it not only contained the proceeds of the booty acquired by Harald in war, but also his share of the plunder of the imperial palace at Constantinople, which, according to custom, was given to the Væringjar on every demise of the emperor, and it happened that Harald was present at three revolutions in that fluctuating court. Magnus soon afterwards died, 1047. having received from his countrymen the unequivocal title of *Good*, which is seldom bestowed by the people upon sovereigns by whom the epithet is wholly unmerited. He left Harald in the quiet enjoyment of the entire kingdom of Norway, and expressed his will that Svend Estrithson, whose pretensions he had so strenuously resisted, should also be allowed peacefully to sway the sceptre of Denmark, as the nearest relation to the late king, Harde-Knud.*

Although Harald Hardráde had not the slightest claim of right to the crown of Denmark, his ambitious and restless spirit impelled him to contest the well-founded claim of the nephew of Canute, confirmed as it was by the choice of the nation. A desolating war of predatory

* Snorre, Saga af Haraldi Hardráda, cap. xvii—xxix.

expeditions was for some time carried on between the two countries, until at last their relative maritime strength was decided in a great naval battle at the mouth of the Nissa, on the coast of Norway, in which
1064. the Danish fleet was entirely routed, and Svend Estrithson saved himself by flight. But he retired into Zealand, and prepared to renew the contest, when Harald very prudently determined to make a peace, by the terms of which, the right of Svend to the throne of Denmark was expressly recognised. The male line of her ancient kings, who traced their origin to Odin himself, having failed with the last son of Canute the Great, his nephew thus became the founder of a new dynasty, which continued to reign for more than three centuries,
1375. until the death of Valdemar IV, in whom the male line again failed, and was ultimately replaced by the present reigning house of Oldenburg.*

During the reign of Svend Estrithson, Denmark was visited by an intelligent German ecclesiastic, Adam of Bremen, who praises, in no measured terms, the learning and piety of that monarch, by whom he was received in the kindest manner. But the picture which he draws of the condition of the kingdom, does no great honor to the king's administration, or rather, it ought probably to be attributed to the operation of causes, beyond the controul of any government in that age. Adam of Bremen describes the country of the Danes as consisting almost entirely of islands. He mentions Zealand as being the largest and richest of this archipelago, and celebrated

* Snorre, Saga af Haraldi Hardráda, cap. xxx—lxxiii. Suhm, Geschichte, &c. von Werlauff, pp. 42—43. Geschichtstafel v.

for the valour of its inhabitants. Ledra had been, but Roskild then was, its capital. The island of Fionia was the next in importance, and very fruitful, but its coasts were infested with pirates. Odinsey, its capital, was a great city. To pass from this island to Zealand, you must encounter a stormy and dangerous sea, and if you escape this peril, you seldom fail to fall into the hands of pirates. Jutland is terminated to the North by the island of Vendila (Vendsyssel), and its soil was barren, except on the banks of the rivers, which alone were cultivated. All the rest was made up of vast solitudes, impenetrable forests, and briny marshes. The principal cities were near the arms of the sea. Scania itself was almost an island, rich, fertile, and full of churches: a tract of land, composed of deep forests and rugged mountains, separated it from Gothland. Here was the city of Lund, where the sea-rovers deposited their plunder: the neighbouring seas were covered with these *Withingos* (Vikingar), who paid a tribute to the king of Denmark for permission to cruise against the *Barbarians*, who abounded on the shores of this sea, which they often abused to plunder and to make prisoners, whom they sold into slavery. "There are several other things," continues our author, "in the laws and customs of Denmark contrary to equity, and I have found nothing praiseworthy but the usage of selling into servitude women who dishonor themselves. As to the men, if they are detected in any crime, they prefer decapitation to stripes: in short, there is no other punishment in this country but slavery or death; and when condemned to die, they march with a joyful countenance to the place of execution. Tears and groans, with every other mark of grief which we

esteem salutary, the Danes detest, and mourn neither for their sins nor for the death of their relations." *

Svend Estrithson was a liberal benefactor to the church. He established new episcopal sees, encouraged the missionaries, and extirpated Paganism in its last retreat—the island of Bornholm. The account given by Adam of Bremen of the beneficial effects produced by the diffusion of Christianity in Norway is strongly contrasted with the picture sketched by the same hand of the state of manners and police in Denmark. "Since these people have embraced Christianity," says he, "they have been taught to love peace and truth, to be content with their humble lot, and to distribute bountifully what they have accumulated by honest means, instead of plundering others. Instead of practising the wicked arts of magic, they profess with the apostles the simple faith of Jesus Christ crucified. Of all men, they are those who at present observe the greatest moderation in eating and drinking, and the greatest continence in other sensual pleasures. They have so much respect for the church and the clergy, that he who does not go to the offering every day, after having heard mass, is hardly considered as a Christian. Baptisms and confirmations, dedications of altars and sacred things, are all carefully performed with them as by the Danes. And the only exception that I have heard to these exemplary manners arises from the avarice of the clergy, who extort irregularly what ought only to be paid according to a fixed rate."†

* Adam Brem. de Situ Danarum, cap. ccviii—ccx.

† De Situ Danarum, cap. ccxxxviii. It ought to be observed that Adam of Bremen had never visited Norway, he therefore speaks only from hearsay as to that country.

"In many parts of Norway and Sweden," continues our authority, "there are men of illustrious birth, who live like the patriarchs of old, upon the produce of their flocks and herds. These are all Christians, except those who dwell beyond the arctic circle, on the borders of the sea, who are still addicted to the arts of magic, by which they pretend to know what is passing in every part of the world,—and to work the most wonderful miracles. I have heard too that in the rugged Alps of that region there are wild women and savage men, who seldom suffer themselves to be seen, are cloathed with the skins of wild beasts, and speak a jargon hardly intelligible to the neighbouring people. In these mountains there is such a plenty of game, that most of the inhabitants live by hunting."*

Such was the condition of the native countries of the Northmen, whilst the colony which they had planted in France, had become a flourishing and powerful state. Duke Richard II, the brother-in-law of the English kings, Ethelred and Canute the Great, left Normandy to his son, Richard III, who died, after a short reign of two years. He was succeeded in the duchy by his brother Robert, to whom his people gave the appropriate surname of *le Diable*, from the wild and almost savage violence of his nature. His character was also marked by many of the traits which distinguished the Northern chieftains of the heroic age—undaunted valour, boundless liberality to his followers, and a spirit of romantic enterprize. Robert had an illegitimate son, by the daughter of a tanner, at Falaise, in Normandy, and 1026.

* Cap. ccxxxix. It should be observed that our author here speaks, of the Laplanders, who still retained their primitive faith, and wild, barbarous manners.

having resolved to set out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he required the great vassals of the duchy to recognize this son as his lawful successor.* This they promised to do, but as soon as the news of Robert's death, at Nice, in Bythinia, was received in Normandy, a powerful faction among the Norman seigneurs, refused
1035. to acknowledge his illegitimate son as their duke. The claim of William (afterwards the conqueror of England) was contested by Guy, son of the Count of Burgundy, and Alix, daughter of duke Richard II, whose title was at least as good as that of William, since there was no fixed rule of succession established by law or usage in the duchy. The talents and activity of William soon decided the controversy with the sword, and he inflicted a severe and cruel vengeance upon the inhabitants of Alençon, who had espoused the cause of his competitor. During the siege of their town by William, the unfortunate burghers had insulted him by hanging out from their walls the skins of cattle, in allusion to the trade of his maternal grandfather, and the duke took cruel vengeance, by savagely mutilating thirty prisoners of the garrison, and throwing their mangled limbs over the walls into the town. He confirmed his title to the duchy, by espousing Matilda, daughter of the Count of

* The Norman seigneurs endeavoured to dissuade the duke from going on this pilgrimage, alleging the danger of leaving them without a chief: "Par ma foi," answered Robert, "je ne vous laisserai point sans seigneur. J'ai un petit bâtard qui grandera, s'il plaît à Dieu, choisissez-le des à présent, et je le saiserai devant vous de ce duché, comme mon successeur." The Normans complied with the duke's wishes, "because it suited them so to do," says the chronicle, and swore fidelity to the child, placing their hands between his, according to the feudal usage. (Thierry, tom. i. p. 221.)

Flanders, who was descended in the maternal line from duke Richard III. He reunited to Normandy the duchy of Maine, which had been bequeathed to him by the last duke of that province, and thus collected new strength to enable him to battle for the English crown.*

In the meantime, other military adventurers who went forth from the duchy had laid the foundations of a Norman kingdom in the south of Europe. The sons of a Norman seigneur, Tancred of Hauteville, crossed the Alps in the disguise of pilgrims, and joining others of their countrymen in Italy, who were returning from the Holy Land, signalized their valour, first against the Saracens, and afterwards against the Italians themselves. They conquered the province of Apulia, and subsequently the whole of Naples and Sicily, which was confirmed to the dynasty of the celebrated Robert Guiscard, by the donation of the papal See. The Normans transplanted into Italy their peculiar manners, laws, and institutions; and the countries conquered by their arms, continued to flourish under their rule until the extinction of this dynasty, in the latter part of the twelfth century. Their dominion corresponded with the limits of the present kingdom of Naples and Sicily, and has left indelible impressions upon the political constitution of that kingdom, even after numerous revolutions and changes of dynasty.† 1016—1194.

King Edward the Confessor had contracted, from his long exile in Normandy, a partiality for the manners, customs, and language of that country, highly offensive to his Saxon countrymen. The land was filled with

* Roman de Rou, tom. i. pp. 370 ad fin. tom. ii. pp. 1—59. Ed. Pluquet. Depping, Histoire des Normands, tom. ii. pp. 180—185.

† Gibbon, Decline and Fall, vol. x. ch. 56.

Norman favourites, who insulted the natives with an ostentatious display of their favour at court, and poisoned the mind of the king with insinuations against Earl Godwin and his sons, whose popularity presented
1048. a serious obstacle to their grasping pretensions. Among these foreign guests of the king was Eustache, Count of Boulogne, who had married Edward's sister. Eustache, on his return to France, stopped at Dover, where the insolence of his followers produced a sanguinary feud with the burgesses, in which about twenty English and as many Frenchmen were slain. The Count was indebted for his safety to the fleetness of his horse, and hastened to the king to complain of the injury: and Godwin was ordered to chastise the insolence of his *men*. The Earl endeavoured to appease the wrath of the king, and begged him to hear, before he judged and condemned his countrymen. Edward disdained to listen to this reasonable counsel, and influenced by the intrigues of the foreigners, summoned the Earl himself before a great council at Gloucester to answer to a charge of disobedience and rebellion. But Godwin, finding that he was already condemned by anticipation, resolved to oppose his popularity with the nation, to the influence of the Norman-French with the monarch, whom he had raised to the throne. Three armies were levied from the three great earldoms of Godwin, and his sons, Harold and Sweyn. The insurgents marched towards Gloucester, to chastise the depredations committed on the lands of Harold by the Norman-French garrison in the castle of Hereford, and, at the same time, to demand of Edward that he should deliver up his foreign favorites to the justice of the nation. Instead of answering this demand, the king summoned the Danish earls, Leofric and Siward, who

ruled in Mercia and Northumbria, to come to his assistance with the power of their earldoms. The Anglo-Danes and the Anglo-Saxons were thus once more brought in conflict; but the principal chieftains of the former perceived the folly of submitting to be used as the instruments for crushing those who had now become their countrymen, in order to promote the rapacity of the Norman-French, whom the weakness of Edward had permitted to gain a footing in the kingdom. They therefore eagerly seconded a proposition for an armistice, and the points in dispute were referred to the decision of the Witena-gemót, at London. Both parties approached the place of meeting with an armed array, and Godwin demanded hostages for his personal safety, previous to appearing before the national assembly. This demand was refused, and the Anglo-Saxon earls were ordered to clear themselves of the charges preferred against them, by the oaths of twelve compurgators, within five days, or to leave the kingdom. Earl Godwin wisely preferred the latter alternative, and fled with his wife, and his three sons, Sweyn, Tostig, and Gurth, to the earl of Flanders for protection. The queen, Godwin's sister Editha, was imprisoned in a monastery.†

After the flight of Godwin and his sons, England was inundated with Norman adventurers, who supplanted the natives in the favor of Edward, and filled all the places of honor and profit both in church and state. They were followed by an adventurer of another stamp, who came, not for earldoms and episcopal sees, but who aimed at the sceptre of a kingdom which he

* Thierry, Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands, tom. i. pp. 210—218.

saw falling from the feeble grasp of a monarch, the last surviving male but one of the race of Cerdic. Duke
1051. William of Normandy visited England with a splendid train of followers, and found his countrymen in possession, not only of the favor of the Anglo-Saxon king, but of many of the strongholds of the kingdom. Edward received the duke with the most distinguished honors, and if he did not directly encourage his designs upon the succession, at least gave him every facility to concert with the Norman favorites of the king, the measures necessary to secure it in his own favor.*

1052. In the following year, Earl Godwin sailed with an expedition from the ports of Flanders, which was joined by a fleet from Ireland, under his son Harold, with which they entered the Thames, and sent a respectful message to Edward, demanding a revision of the sentence of outlawry which had been pronounced against them. This demand was reluctantly conceded by the king, with the advice of the prelate Stigand, who acted as mediator between the two conflicting parties of his countrymen. The foreign intruders fled precipitately from the kingdom, and Godwin surrendered to Edward, as hostages for his loyalty, his son Wulfnoth and his nephew Hakon, who were sent to Normandy for safe keeping. Earl Godwin did not long survive this restoration to his country and honors, and his memory has been stigmatized with the character of traitor, or enobled with that of patriot, according as his history was written by Norman or Saxon chroniclers.†

The death of Godwin was followed by that of Siward,

* Turner, vol. iii. p. 323. Thierry, tom. i. p. 223.

† Lingard, vol. i. p. 415.

earl of Northumbria, surnamed, by his Anglo-Danish countrymen, 'the Giant,' from his prodigious size and strength. His sister was married to Duncan, king of 1054.
Scotland; and whilst Macduff, thane of Fife, excited a formidable revolt in Scotland, Siward led his brave Northumbrians against the usurper and tyrant, Macbeth. He returned in triumph from his expedition, having succeeded in making Malcolm king. Attacked by disease, and feeling his end approaching, Siward ordered his attendants to raise him up, and let him die the death of a warrior: 'Put on my helmet and coat of mail, and give me my shield and battle-axe, that I may die as a a soldier ought, who has survived so many deadly conflicts.'*

Siward's son Waltheoff, being a minor, the vacant earldom was conferred upon Tostig, the third son of Godwin. Harold the elder succeeded to his father as earl of all the country south of the Thames; whilst his own earldom of East-Anglia was conferred upon Alfgar, the son of Leofric. Harold advanced rapidly in favor with his Saxon countrymen, to whom he was recommended, both by his father's popularity and his own heroic qualities. His brother Tostig, on the other hand, far from acquiring the affection of his Anglo-Danish vassals in Northumbria, provoked an insurrection by his oppressive exactions, and was violently expelled from his earldom. The people made choice of Morcar, 1065.
the son of Alfgar, to succeed him, who pursued the fugitive tyrant into Mercia, where Morcar was joined by his brother Edwin, who had a command on the marches of Wales. King Edward commanded Harold to levy

* Turner, vol. iii. p. 333. Thierry, tom i. p. 234.

his power, and march against the intruding Earl; and had Harold listened only to the suggestions of personal ambition, he had now a fair opportunity of crushing an aspiring family, the rival of his own. But Harold displayed a greatness of soul above these vulgar passions, and consented to terms of pacification with the Northumbrians, by which his brother, Tostig, was excluded from the earldom, the election of Morcar was confirmed, and the laws of Canute were restored in this part of England.*

Edward the Confessor had recalled from Germany his nephew and namesake, the exiled son of his brother Edmund, but the young prince died soon after his arrival in England, and Edgar the Atheling was now the only survivor of the race of Cerdic. But his hereditary claim was passed over in silence, and the minds of all men among the Anglo-Saxons, were directed towards their beloved countryman Harold, as alone capable and worthy to wield the national sceptre, when a circumstance occurred which accidentally gave William of Normandy the advantage in this race of
1065. ambition. Harold had sailed from the coast of England, either designing to visit Normandy for the purpose of reclaiming his relations, Wulfnoth and Hakon, who had been sent thither as hostages, or, according to other accounts, on an excursion of pleasure, when he was shipwrecked on the opposite coast of Ponthieu. According to the barbarous usage of the time, Harold and his companions were seized and imprisoned by the lord of the district, with the view of extorting a heavy ransom for their liberation. Harold was thus reduced to the

* Thierry, tom. i. pp. 237—240.

necessity of soliciting the protection of the duke of Normandy, who demanded the prisoners from the lord of Ponthieu. They were immediately delivered into the hands of William, who affected to treat them with the highest marks of external honor and distinction. During the time that Harold was detained in Normandy, he was feasted and caressed by William, who at first extorted from him a reluctant promise, and afterwards a solemn oath upon the holy relics, whith the Norman had artfully concealed from view, to aid him in asserting his pretended claim to the English crown. Having thus entangled the conscience of his rival in this snare, William dismissed him with magnificent presents, and his nephew, one of the hostages, his younger brother being still detained as security for the performance of the obligation thus contracted.*

King Edward died soon after the return of Harold to 1066.
England, and weak as he was, both in body and mind, had the courage to declare, on his death bed, Harold, the son of Godwin, as worthy to be his successor. This designation was confirmed in an assembly of the thanes, and acquiesced in by the nation. He was solemnly crowned with the crown of gold, by the prelate Stigand, who presented him with the royal sceptre and battle-axe, the national symbol of the primitive Saxons.†

William of Normandy now prepared to assert, by arms, his pretensions to the crown of England. He sent messengers to Harold to summon him to perform a promise, sanctioned by solemnities, in the opinion of

* Turner, vol. iii. pp. 339—352. Lingard, tom. i pp. 424—428. Thierry, tom. i. pp. 245—254.

† Lingard, vol. i. p 234. Note. Thierry, tom. i. p. 257.

the age, the most terrific and binding. Harold replied, that the promise was extorted by violence, and sanctioned by fraud; that he held, from the free choice of the nation, his crown, which it was not in his power, without their consent, to transfer to another; and, finally, that he would not perform engagements thus radically defective and inconsistent with his paramount duties. William reproached his rival with his sacrilegious perfidy, and formed a close alliance with the see of Rome. The Pope consecrated his banner with the apostolic benediction, in return for the promise of a due share of the fruits of conquest. William convoked a national assembly of the duchy, from whom he extorted a subsidy in men, arms, and money, to aid him in this great enterprise. He published his war-ban in the neighbouring countries, inviting military adventurers from every quarter, promising them the spoil of the Saxons as their reward. Four hundred large vessels, with more than a thousand batteaux, were assembled at the mouth of the Dive. The army was embarked at St Valery; and the ship which bore William preceded the rest of the fleet, with the consecrated banner of the Pope displayed at the mast-head, its many-coloured sails embellished with the device of the lions of Normandy, and its prow adorned with the figure of an infant archer, bending his bow, and ready to let fly his arrow.*

In the mean time, Tostig, the fugitive earl of Northumbria, applied to his cousin, Svend Estrithson, king of Denmark, urging him to attempt the restoration of the Danish dominion in England. But Svend peremptorily refused to engage in the design, and Tostig pro-

* Thierry, tom. i. pp. 263—281.

ceeded to the court of Harald Hardráde, in Norway, where he sought to engage that restless monarch in new enterprises of ambition. "All men know," said the earl to the king, "that the North has not a warrior who can compare with thee, and much I wonder that thou shouldst have wasted so many years in vain attempts on Denmark, when England lies open to thee an easy prey." Harald was induced by these flattering suggestions to undertake an expedition to the coast of Northumbria. For this purpose, he summoned the power of his kingdom, and collected a fleet of several hundred vessels. The embarkation of his forces was marked by inauspicious omens. A warrior on board the king's ship dreamt that he saw the whole fleet covered with ravens, vultures, and other foul birds of prey, perched on the masts and prows of the vessels, and a gigantic woman (tröll-kona,) standing on a rock, with a drawn sword in her hand, counting the ships as they past, and singing to the birds:

Surely the king by fate is driven
that thus from East to West he hastes.
On! on, ye birds of prey!
The table is spread—the feast prepared:
now your banquet chuse!
For I with them go—I with them go!

Another soldier dreamt that the fleet neared the English coast, and he saw the Saxon army drawn up in order of battle on the shore, with banners flaring against the sky. In front of the ranks rode along a gigantic woman (tröll-kona) mounted upon a wolf, holding in his jaws a human carcase, dripping with gore, which he devoured; then the giantess gave the ravenous beast another, and another still, which he devoured in the same manner.

The dauntless soul of Hardráde was unmoved by these sinister auguries, which made such a powerful impression upon his followers. He embarked with his queen, Elizabeth, and her two daughters, who were left at the Orkneys, and was joined by Tostig with a few ships at the mouth of the Tyne. They entered the Humber, and ascended the Ouse to attack York, which was defended by the earls, Edwin and Morcar. The Saxons were defeated in a great battle, and the earls retired into the town. In the meantime, Harold, the son of Godwin, who had assembled the power of his kingdom on the southern coast, to repel the threatened invasion from Normandy, rapidly marched with a select body of forces to York, where he arrived within four
Sept. 25. days after the battle with the Earls. The Northman was taken by surprise. His army had stripped off their coats of mail, on account of the heat of the weather, and marched without any other defensive armour than their bucklers and helmets. Undismayed by the sudden appearance of the enemy, Harald Hardráde drew up his forces in a circular line, bending back the wings, with shield touching shield, and lances firmly fixed in the earth, and pointed outwards towards the enemy.* In the centre he planted his royal standard, called 'the Ravager of the Land.' He then extemporized a battle-song, urging his friends to fight, though exposed, without their coats of mail, to the edge of the cerulean swords, even his own splendid and invulnerable breast-plate, called 'the *Emma*,' being left on board the fleet.

* This formed what the Northmen called a 'Skjold-borg,' or Fortress of Shields.

Harald Hardráde rode round his line, wearing a blue tunic and glittering helmet. His horse stumbled, and he fell to the ground. 'Who is that chieftain,' exclaimed Harold the Saxon. Being told that it was the king of the Northmen, Harold replied: 'He is indeed a gallant warrior, but his doom is sealed!' Before the two armies encountered each other, twenty Saxon cavaliers, both men and horses covered with glittering steel, advanced in front of the Northmen line, and one of them called aloud for Tostig, son of Godwin. Upon his answering the summons, the herald declared that his royal brother offered him peace and the possession of Northumbia, and if that would not content him, a third part of kingdom. 'These are fine promises,' replied the earl, 'and had they had been made some months ago, much blood might have been saved, and the condition of England far different from what it now is. But if I accept these conditions, what compensation are you prepared to offer to my faithful ally, the noble king Harald?' —'Seven feet of land for a grave, or as he is a very tall man perhaps a little more,' was the contemptuous reply. 'Go tell my brother,' said Tostig, 'that he must prepare for battle, for never shall it be said that the son of Godwin was faithless to the son of Sigurd.' The Norwegian monarch then enquired who this eloquent messenger was. 'It was king Harold himself,' answered the Jarl. 'Would I had known it before,' exclaimed the king, 'we might even now have decided the battle?'—'I was aware of that?' said Tostig, 'but as he offered me peace and safety, I could not think of betraying him.'

The Anglo-Saxon cavalry charged the circular line of the Northmen, and making no impression upon the firm ranks of the enemy, dispersed irregularly in every

direction. They again rallied and renewed the charge, with the same result; but the Northmen were now tempted to break their ranks, and pursue the fugitive cavalry. The English rushed into the opening, and Harald Hardráde was shot through the neck with an arrow. He fell dead, and Tostig having assumed the command, his brother again offered peace and life, both to him and the Northmen. But the latter shouted that they would sooner perish than ask quarter from the English. Fresh troops arrived from the fleet, completely armed, but much fatigued with their rapid march, and the battle was again renewed with increased fury. But this last desperate effort was vain. Tostig was slain, and Harold the Saxon, once more offered the vanquished their lives. He sent for Olaf, the son of the deceased king of the Northmen, compelled him to swear to live in amity with England, and, according to the Anglo-Saxon accounts, dismissed him courteously to return to his native country with twelve ships. But this generosity seems rather improbable, and Snorre represents that Olaf was not in the battle, but, as soon as he learnt the death of his father, collected the remnant of his friends, and sailed for Norway.*

Harold, the son of Godwin, was at York, wounded, and reposing from the fatigues of his northern campaign, when he received information that William of Normandy had landed at Pevensey, and marched to Hastings. Harold hastened to London, issued orders to concentrate the power of the kingdom at the capital, and pushed on with such forces as he could suddenly collect, to within seven miles of the Norman camp, where he entrenched

* Snorre, Saga af Haraldi Hardráda, cap. lxxxi—xcviii.

himself, and awaited their attack. Some of his friends counselled him to retire, and ravage the country between the sea and the Thames, so as to cut off the enemy's resources and gain time, until he could attack them with less unequal forces. Others earnestly entreated him not to risk his own person on the field, as he was bound to the Norman by the most solemn oaths, the violation of which would be attended with fatal consequences. Harold derided these fears as unworthy of a patriot king and a triumphant warrior.

William affected to express surprise, when he learnt that the Saxon army was commanded by Harold, that a man should venture his person in battle with the guilt of perjury weighing on his soul. The duke heard mass, received the sacrament, and hung round his neck the sacred relics on which Harold had sworn. His consecrated banner was entrusted to Toustain the Fair, two other Norman barons having previously declined the dangerous honor. He marshalled his host in three divisions, placing the archers in front, the heavy infantry, armed in coats of mail, in the second line, and in the third, his Norman knights and men-at-arms. William harangued his army, reminding them of the exploits of their heroic ancestors, both against the Saxons and Franks, the achievements of Hastings and Rollo, of the perfidious massacre of the Northmen by Ethelred, and the more recent assassination of the young prince Alfred, which he imputed to the machinations of the father of Harold. 'Fight manfully, and put all to the sword; if we conquer, we shall be all rich. What I gain, you gain; what I conquer, you conquer: if I take the land, it is yours. Know that I have not come hither merely to assert my right, but to avenge our

whole race of the felonies, perjuries, and treasons of these English. They murdered, on the night of St Brice, all our Danish brethren in England, men, women, and children. They slaughtered the companions of my relation Alfred, and put him to death. Let us march, then, and, with the aid of God, chastise their misdeeds!'

The spot which Harold had selected for this ever-memorable contest, was a high ground, then called Senlac, nine miles from Hastings, opening to the south, and covered in the rear by an extensive wood. He posted his troops on the declivity of the hill in one compact mass, covered with their shields, and wielding their enormous battle-axes. In the centre, the royal standard or gonfanon was fixed in the ground, with the figure of an armed warrior, worked in thread of gold, and ornamented with precious stones. Here stood Harold, and his brothers Gurth and Leofwin, and around them, the rest of the Saxon army, every man on foot.

Oct. 14. As the Normans approached the Saxon entrenchments, the monks and priests who accompanied their army, retired to a neighbouring hill to pray, and observe the issue of the battle. A Norman warrior, named Taillefer, spurred his horse in front of the line, and tossing up in the air his sword, which he caught again in his hand, sung the national song of Charlemagne and Roland: the Normans joined in the chorus, and shouted, "Dieu aide! Dieu aide!" They were answered by the Saxons, with the adverse cry of "Christ's rood! the holy rood!" *

* Taillefer, ki mult bien cantant
Sur un cheval ki tost alout,

The Norman archers let fly a shower of arrows into the Saxon ranks. Their infantry and cavalry advanced to the gates of the redoubts, which they vainly endeavoured to force. The Saxons thundered upon their armour, and broke their lances with the heavy battle-axe, and the Normans retreated to the division commanded by William. The duke then caused his archers again to advance, and to direct their arrows obliquely in the air, so that they might fall beyond and over the enemy's rampart. The Saxons were severely galled by the Norman missiles, and Harold himself was wounded in the eye. The attack of the infantry and men at arms again commenced with the cries of "Notre-Dame! Dieu aide! Dieu aide!" But the Normans were repulsed, and pursued by the Saxons to a deep ravine, where their horses plunged and threw the riders. The melée was here dreadful, and a sudden panic seized the invaders, who fled from the field, exclaiming that their duke was slain. William rushed before the fugitives, with his helmet in hand, menacing and even striking

Devant li Dus alout cantant
De Karlemaine è de Rollant,
E d'Olivier, et des vassals
Ki moururent en Renchevals.
* * * * * *
Normans escrient: *Dex aïe!*
La gent Englesche: *Ut* s'escrie:
Olicrosse souvent crioent,
E *Goderode* reclamoent,
Olicrosse est en Engleiz
Ke *sainte Croix* est en Françeiz,
E Goderode est autrement
Com en Frenceiz *Dex tot poissant.*

ROMAN DE ROU.

them with his lance, and shouting with a loud voice:—'I am still alive, and with the help of God, I still shall conquer!' The men-at-arms once more returned to attack the redoubts, but they were again repelled by the impregnable phalanx of the Saxons. The duke now resorted to the stratagem of ordering a thousand horse to advance, and then suddenly retreat, in the hope of drawing the enemy from his entrenchments. The Saxons fell into the snare, and rushed out with their battle-axes slung about their necks, to pursue the flying foe. The Normans were joined by another body of their own army, and both turned upon the Saxons, who were assailed on every side with swords and lances, whilst their hands were employed in wielding their enormous battle-axes. The invaders now rushed through the broken ranks of their opponents into the entrenchments, pulled down the royal standard, and erected in its place the papal banner. Harold was slain, with his brothers, Gurth and Leofwin. The sun declined in the western horizon, and with his retiring beams sunk the glory of the Saxon name.

The rest of the companions of Harold fled from the fatal field, where the Normans passed the night, exulting over their hard-earned victory. The next morning, William ranged his troops under arms, and every man who passed the sea was called by name, according to the muster-roll, drawn up before their embarkation at St Valery. Many were deaf to that call. The invading army consisted originally of nearly sixty thousand men, and of these one fourth lay dead on the field. To the fortunate survivors was allotted the spoil of the vanquished Saxons as the first fruits of their victory; and the bodies of the slain, after being stripped, were

hastily buried by their trembling friends. According to one narrative, the body of Harold was begged by his mother as a boon from William, to whom she offered as a ransom its weight in gold. But the stern and pitiless conqueror ordered the corpse of the Saxon king to be buried on the beach, adding, with a sneer: 'He guarded the coast while he lived, let him continue to guard it now he is dead.' Another account represents that two monks of the monastery of Waltham, which had been founded by the son of Godwin, humbly approached the Norman, and offered him ten marks of gold, for permission to bury their king and benefactor. They were unable to distinguish his body among the heaps of slain, and sent for Harold's mistress, Editha, surnamed 'the Fair' and 'the Swan's neck,'—to assist them in the search. The features of the Saxon monarch were recognized by her whom he had loved, and his body was interred at Waltham with regal honours in the presence of several Norman earls and knights.*

* Turner, vol. iii. p. 374—398. Lingard, vol. i. p. 444—453. Palgrave, vol. i. pp. 376—391. Thierry, tom. i. pp. 291—306.

THE END.

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